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THE SUPREME COURT'S decision on the gold cases is the more heartening to the Administration because it was not fully expected. Although it had generally been taken for granted that the court would uphold the right of Congress to abrogate the gold clause in private contracts, there was much uncertainty regarding the ruling on the government's own obligations. By declaring that Congress lacked the power to invalidate the clause in its own bonds and at the same time ruling that owners of the bonds were powerless to force the government to make payment in gold, the court has found legal grounds for dismissing all claims for alleged losses resulting from the revaluation of the dollar. While to many persons this will seem to be a subterfuge unworthy of the highest court in the land, it serves the purpose of giving final legal sanction to the government's action quite as well as any other decision could have done. In this sense it may be taken as one more indication of the court's growing sense of social responsibility. The only regret is that the court could not have followed the precedent established by ex-Justice Holmes and based its decision frankly on social rather than merely legal considerations. But even as it stands the ruling indicates that the Administration has little to fear regarding the remainder of the New Deal legislation. Although the abrogation of the gold clause was by no means the most fundamental step in the Administration's program, it was one of the most difficult to defend on constitutional grounds. With this obstacle surmounted, there is no longer an excuse for timidity and procrastination in formulating policies to meet the needs of the day.

WHEN JUSTICE McREYNOLDS, in expressing his dissent, declared the Constitution to be "gone," he vividly characterized the difference between this ruling and the narrow legalistic position which the court has frequently taken in the past. The bitterness with which the four dissenting justices assailed the decision serves as a disquieting reminder of how easily the die might have fallen the other way. With all due regard for the sincerity and integrity of the court, the fact remains that th intellectual bias of individual justices may become the determining factor in the decision. This has been so patent in recent years that the opinion of certain justices has been confidently foretold, the final decision being in the hands of two or three men whose social philosophy is not so clearly formulated. We may applaud the court's action in this particular instance, yet be more than ever convinced of the undesirability of having legislation subject to the review of the judiciary. It is largely accidental that the court is dominated at present by justices who are described as liberal. Otherwise the New Deal legislation as a whole might have been outlawed. There is but one protection against such a disastrous possibility—a constitutional amendment depriving the Supreme Court of its self-arrogated right to invalidate legislation duly enacted by Congress.

THE GERMAN REPLY to the Anglo-French note of February 3 is a masterpiece of skilful diplomacy, but disappointing to those who had hoped that the Reich might be maneuvered back into the League merely by an *ex post facto* recognition of the legality of its rearmament. Although conciliatory in tone, the reply is essentially a notice to the powers that Germany will not accept anything which is not clearly in its interest. It welcomes discussion of the proposed aviation convention, both because this implies tacit recognition of the legality of the German air force and out of fear lest England, France, and Italy conclude a three-power pact against the Reich. But beyond this there is not the slightest evidence that Hitler has modified his position either on rearmament or on collective security. The German government goes out of its way to reiterate its traditional contention that the threatened armament race arises from "the abandonment by the heavily armed states of disarmament as prescribed by the treaties." It ignores the Eastern Locarno and gives no indication of a willingness to reopen the larger questions of European disarmament. Most disturbing of all is the deliberate snubbing of France in the suggestion of an early interchange of views between Britain and Germany. While this rather clumsy effort to drive a wedge between the allied powers is not likely to succeed, it has aroused such resentment in France as virtually to eliminate the possibility of an early settlement.

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A NEW GENERAL has risen on the Washington horizon, like General Johnson a man with a worthy army record capped by experience in big business. He is Brigadier General Robert E. Wood (retired), and the President has chosen him chairman of the committee to advise on the spending of the four-billion-dollar public-works fund. He is president of Sears, Roebuck, and director of two banks and a railroad. He is not a newcomer to Washington, having been an associate on the Industrial Advisory Board of the NRA with Gerard Swope, Walter Teagle, and Pierre du Pont, and is a member of the Consumers' Advisory Board of the NRA. His choice as spender-in-chief indicates the rise of the right wing of the President's Cabinet, since he bears the hallmark of Secretary Roper and is one of the big shots in the new business lobby which is to advise the Administration. If he makes a name for himself in the new task he might look forward to filling the shoes of dictatorship at the NRA left empty by General Johnson. It has been denied that he is in line for the revived office of administrator, or that the five-man board is to go. But the denial really means that the suggestion is premature. General Wood's army career includes fighting in the Philippine insurrection, useful service in the construction of the Panama Canal, and important duties in the World War. He was acting quartermaster general in 1918-19. His business affiliations have been chiefly with mail-order houses and that has made him an expert on the mentality of farmers. On labor questions the opinion in Washington is that he stands much to the right of General Johnson.

THE FASCIST PLOT revealed by General Smedley Butler to the so-called Dickstein committee, and received with derision by most of the leading newspapers of this democracy, was given official authentication in the committee's report to Congress. "There is no question," it says, "that these [fascist] attempts were discussed, were planned, and might have been placed in execution when and if the financial backers deemed it expedient." Suppressed portions of the Butler testimony should now be published. The *New Masses* supplies its version of the suppressions and includes many important names—the du Ponts, Al Smith, Hugh Johnson, Douglas MacArthur, Hanford MacNider, and in particular the American Liberty League. It is plain that the committee bungled into the inner privacy of some of our most respectable financial and political gentlemen and was at pains not to pursue its investigation to a logical conclusion. Instead, its recommendations deal with the need for registering foreign propagandists, deporting them if need be, and outlawing disobedience by members of our armed forces. It ends with a demand for legislation making it unlawful to advocate overthrow of government by force. Advocacy of violence thus would become criminal, but high financial strategists could plot it with impunity. For our part we believed the Butler story at the time chiefly because it bore out our conception of the inanity of the financial mind in the realms of revolutionary conspiracy. Fascism, if it comes, will not be cooked up in Wall Street. It will be a pseudo-radical movement with a popular following, which Wall Street will eventually see the wisdom of supporting. We are much more frightened by Father Coughlin and Huey Long than by the brokers who were set to bait the trap for General Butler.

THE HAUPTMANN TRIAL is over—and the American public may recover as best it can from a glut of vicarious emotional excitement ranging from a mother's grief over her lost child to a convict's terror of the electric chair. The story of the kidnapping and its aftermath is an extremely dramatic one and we should be the last to deny its fascination or condescend to those who find it interesting. But it is also true that one by one every simple human response has been distended and distorted into monstrous shapes of unreality; day by day legitimate human curiosity has been whipped into a craving for ever larger doses of the yellow drug dispensed by press and radio, culminating on the last day of the trial in a blood lust that brought a screaming mob to the white courthouse in Flemington and even found its way into the summation of the state's attorney, Mr. Wilentz, who proclaimed himself the leader of the mob outside when he stood before his victim and uttered these words: "He will be thawed out, he is cold, yes, he will be thawed out when he hears that switch . . ." But Mr. Wilentz, whose political ambitions are everybody's secret, was only one of hundreds who hitched their personal sideshows to the weird circus at Flemington, until the legal proceeding itself became merely another sideshow, and the central issue of a man's guilt or innocence, his life or death, became the pin point on which thousands of newspapermen, special writers, radio announcers, public officials, and mere citizens danced for a populace which had been rendered insatiable. The tale of their excesses would surely read, to the proverbial man from Mars, like the record of a society gone berserk on an unheard-of scale.

IF ANY NEW EVIDENCE was needed to support *The Nation's* charges that the Casa Italiana at Columbia University is under fascist control, it was furnished on Monday, February 11, when a reception was held there in honor of Dr. George J. Ryan, president of the New York City Board of Education. Dr. Ryan on his recent return from Italy had candidly informed the New York press that he was "full of enthusiasm" for Italian education and wished that its methods could be applied in the United States. Only the week before the reception Giuseppe Prezzolini, director of the Casa, had been accused publicly of being a fascist spy, a member of the Opera Volontoria Repressione Anti-fascista. This charge was made by Girolamo Valenti, editor of *La Stampa Libera,* an independent New York Italian newspaper, and has so far not been denied by Prezzolini, who merely declares that he knows "nothing at all about the case." The Graduate Club of Italian Studies had previously withdrawn from the Casa because Prezzolini refused to cooperate in an invitation to Professor Salvemini of Harvard, distinguished historian and anti-fascist. This refusal, as *The Nation* pointed out, was a clear proof of the Casa's continued discrimination against anti-fascists. Yet Dr. Ryan, in return for his support of Mussolini's educational methods, was the recipient of an official reception at the Casa. How did the Casa dare expose itself to further attack by such a gesture? The answer is that the reception to Dr. Ryan was ordered by Italian government authorities in New York, who themselves were under direct orders from Rome. Prezzolini, in spite of the serious charges standing against him, could not refuse.

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OSCAR G. JOHNSTON, general manager of the cotton producers' pool of the AAA, is shortly to depart for Europe to explore the possibilities of a world-wide stabilization of cotton production. This is a belated recognition of the impracticability of a strictly national solution of another of our so-called domestic problems. If there is any important commodity in which a purely national policy appears justified, it is cotton. Prior to the depression this country had a virtual strangle-hold on the market, producing approximately three-fifths of the world's supply. During the early years of the crisis the volume of demand remained relatively stable, but the price declined catastrophically along with that of other basic commodities. To meet this crisis the Roosevelt Administration subsidized the farmers to reduce production, and stimulated a marked rise in prices. While the effect has been temporarily beneficial for the majority of producers, it has encouraged foreign cotton growers to increase their output by an amount which is almost identical with the extent of curtailment in the United States. As a result of the relatively high price of American cotton, exports have declined nearly 50 per cent in volume in a year, leaving the United States with a large surplus for which there is no market. To meet the new crisis by further crop reduction would obviously be suicidal; we must either adjust our costs to those of the outside world—which means reduced incomes for cotton growers—or seek an international agreement which would extend the benefits of regulation on a world-wide basis.

RATIFICATION of the child-labor amendment by four states—Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Indiana—since the first of the year brings the total to twenty-four, two-thirds of the number required to place it in the Constitution. From now on, however, the amendment will have much harder going on its trip through the legislatures. This becomes clearly evident if one checks the states which have ratified against the child-labor chart in Children's Bureau Publication No. 197, "Child Labor: Facts and Figures." Of the ten states which have the fewest children per thousand of population fourteen and fifteen years of age engaged in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, nine—Ohio, California, Indiana, Michigan, Maine, Washington, New Hampshire, Illinois, and Idaho— have approved the amendment. Six of the ten next best from the standpoint of child-labor conditions—Utah, Minnesota, West Virginia, Montana, Oregon, and Wyoming—have ratified. Of the third best group, eight states—Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Iowa, North Dakota, Arizona, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Colorado—have acted favorably. Thus, while there is a chance that the amendment will receive some further support in the states with the better child-labor records, its fate will depend chiefly on the states at the bottom of the list—from Connecticut and Missouri, which have eighty-eight children at work for every one thousand in the population fourteen and fifteen years of age, on down to Mississippi, which has more than three hundred per thousand. The one shining exception among states with poor child-labor conditions is Arkansas, the thirty-second on the list, which curiously enough, was the first state to ratify the amendment eleven years ago. The fact that the amendment has been ratified by the states with the best records and rejected by those with the worst, for the most part Southern states, is all the answer needed to the pious profession of the opponents of the amendment that the states can be relied on to enact suitable remedial laws.

WHAT IS WRONG with the A. F. of L. was abundantly demonstrated by Mr. Tighe's recent purge of the rank-and-file leaders from the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers. It was charged (1) that the rank-and-file leaders were arrant reds, downright Communists; and (2) that they had been paid by the steel employers to split the union. How, in fact, have the rank-and-file leaders sinned? They see in the mass of iron-and-steel workers a group of wage-earners ripe for organization. They propose to carry out the organizational task by a vigorous recognition campaign supplemented by a general strike call. They see through the mockery of the Steel Labor Board, which has never used its powers until too late. They draw back in disgust from the lethargic tactics of the incredible Mr. Tighe, who belongs in an old men's home rather than at the head of the iron-and-steel workers' union. They seek to replace the present leadership with a new, vigorous leadership which will not shrink from militant action. Mr. Tighe's reactions are understandable: he likes his job; he likes the slumbers of the pre-code days; he likes to conserve the financial resources and the spiritual energy of the union. Why undertake to "organize the unorganized" in iron and steel, when that may destroy the system whereby the employers have tolerated the Amalgamated in a few skilled crafts in a few sheet mills? That Mr. Tighe is acting altogether on his own initiative, however, is doubtful. His move is probably the first step in a general A. F. of L. program of "mopping up the reds," a program agreed upon by the Executive Council at Atlantic City in 1934.

CLEVELAND, like several other large cities, is in the throes of a red scare, this time without the direct assistance of Mr. Hearst. The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Industries have issued a report revealing the existence of a "Secret Seven" who represent the city's "better elements" in mortal combat against "subversive activities." This document denounces the activities of "reds," "pinks," and "liberals," and discloses preparations for putting down an expected "rebellion." It also declares that trade chambers in other cities are planning similar action. The report naturally aroused derisive laughter when it appeared, but two days later the Cuyahoga County commander of the American Legion admitted that Legion posts were drilling in uniform for this rebellion-breaking service, and added that arms were easily accessible. The laughter died away. The anti-red program was read again, with its proposal to outlaw Communists and their literature, to suppress "intellectual pinks" by prosecution under the Ohio criminal-syndicalism law, and to carry the fight to schools and churches by a public-education campaign. Cleveland labor has been aroused by the "Secret Seven" and has joined with liberal forces in a counter-offensive. The City Council has ordered an investigation of the Chamber of Commerce's activities, and measures have been introduced in the state legislature to repeal the war-time sedition law. The Nazi-like tendencies in Cleveland have been unearthed in time and are apparently being scotched; it is to be hoped that other cities will profit by the example.

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A Vestige of the New Deal

THE reform of the Federal Reserve system proposed in the Banking Bill of 1935 goes far enough to infuriate the conservative banking interests but not nearly far enough to satisfy those who want open-faced government banking. The bill can be described as a belated recognition of the truth that money is not only cash but also checking deposits in commercial banks. The government already regulates the conditions under which cash can be issued, but the amount of checking deposits, if left to banking supervision, can be varied without regard to the public welfare. The bulk of our money supply today is about twenty-four billion dollars, nearly nineteen billions of it in checking accounts. It is a truism that a change in the amount of available money affects business activity. The effect is not one to be simply calculated, and it varies in varying circumstances. But all the monetary theories agree that the amount of money is a concern of the greatest moment to the whole community. Hence, the responsibility for the amount of money should rest with those charged with defending the public good. Under the original Federal Reserve system the government was without any control whatever. The prime consideration of the system was to make sure that all reasonable demands for loans could be met. The original act did not provide a direct means for regulating the amount of money, and such practice as has grown up to change the amount has been uncertain and slow. The main purpose of the new bill is to give the government direct control.

Stated in this way the case for the bill in an inflexible economic system is unanswerable except to those who do not believe that government can govern. There are those who obstinately contend that bankers are better servants of the people than politicians. The record of politicians may be poor enough, but the bankers are in a bad stance to say they would do better. Between 1929 and 1933, when the national income was being cut in half by deflation, the supply of deposit money decreased by about one-third. So far as the bankers were concerned that was all part of the game. In a deflation, that would be one of the consequences. Banks would fail, wiping out deposits; deposits would be withdrawn for hoarding; and loans to the banks would be called. It did not occur to them that without money the nation could not fight the deflation, and was bound to lose and continue to lose its income. Or if it occurred to them, they saw no way for bankers to change the laws of deflation, sacred as the very laws of nature. Bankers had the power to increase the supply of deposit money but they did not have the statesmanship to use it. That is not a criticism of bankers, for it is not their role to be statesmen. But it is the role of the state to control its own destiny. The old-fashioned people, led by Senator Carter Glass, would be plausible in opposing this shift of economic power to the state as trustee of the people if we still lived in an age of old-fashioned capitalism. A completely flexible capitalist system would take care of inflations and deflations quickly. But it could do so only if capitalists accepted their losses promptly, if wages could fall quickly, and if the state did not come indiscriminately to the rescue of credit institutions with loans. Flexible capitalism has ceased to exist, and with our excess of gold the automatic nature of control has vanished.

The monetary reformers are not satisfied with this bill because it does not go far enough. It does not even define what the aim of the new governmental power shall be. Shall it be stability? Then, they ask, let the bill state it, so that the power will surely be used to maintain a stable price level. But most of them would prefer straightaway government banking. The checking services of the commercial banks could be performed cheaply by the post office, down to the smallest hamlet. The loan services could be performed by state institutions. And since what they really want is the social control of credit, they see no reason for halting far from the goal. The argument that the state cannot control credit for the common good, and that bankers can control it better, is a poor one, since it relies on bankers being disinterested and the public not knowing its own needs. Bankers are biased in favor of high interest rates. To expect disinterestedness from them is an absurdity.

A good deal of talk is heard these days about the "100 per cent principle," advocated by one school of liberal economists. By this banks would keep 100 per cent assets to cover deposits. That would make them into straight deposit institutions, and their loan functions then would pass to investment trusts. The proposal is made by Professor Henry C. Simons in a widely discussed pamphlet, "A Positive Program for Laissez Faire," issued by the University of Chicago Press. Professor Simons is a black pessimist about saving the capitalist system, and believes it and democracy are doomed unless some fairly revolutionary steps are taken. He would nationalize all business which cannot be made competitive, like the railroads and the public utilities. Then he would ruthlessly break up all monopolies and make the forming of monopolies the great social sin. In monopolies he includes trade unions. He would remove tariffs, and he cannot see how capitalism can be saved without the adoption of social taxation. If this program is all that can save democracy, the role of the President in history will after all be that of a Kerensky. Only fascism rather than communism is the likelier next step here. We cannot imagine the President or Congress accepting a fraction of Professor Simons's reforms at this time. But we agree that the new banking bill is not enough, and we too are frightened by the failure of the Administration to make a beginning of social taxation. But so far as it goes, we have no criticism to make of the new legislation. Governor Marriner Eccles of the Federal Reserve Board, who devised it, has at least divested himself of the traditional "banker's outlook." The New Deal has been much curtailed in the last months. The shift in economic power from the few to the many is not going to be realized in industry; if anything, employer strength is being increased and monopolistic tendencies are being fortified. Social control over money is good as far as it goes and control over credit should follow. This and the probable gradual socialization of electric power appear to us the remaining vestiges of the brave program the President once sponsored.

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Italian Sword-Rattling

THE dispatch of two fully equipped divisions of the Italian army to Africa has again aroused fear lest Mussolini is planning the seizure and partition of Abyssinia. This development is the more disquieting because three weeks ago it appeared that the combined pressure of the powers at the League Council had forced Rome to abandon its insistence on an apology and an indemnity. A new incident near Ualual, only slightly less serious than the earlier one, has been seized upon as occasion for a renewal of all the original demands. As in the previous clashes, each side has charged the other with responsibility for the attack, but since the territory itself is in dispute it is virtually impossible to determine the aggressor. It is significant, however, that in each case Abyssinian losses have been far greater than those of Italy.

A further complication has arisen from Abyssinia's proud intransigence in the face of overwhelming odds. Resting on the memory of his country's sensational victory over Italy in 1896, Emperor Haile Selassie has stood his ground and asked for arbitration, apparently unimpressed by the indubitable superiority of the Fascist army. He has done so even though recent events have made it clear that Abyssinia cannot count on the support of any of the major European powers. While Italy is bound by the League Covenant and the Pact of Paris not to wage war on Abyssinia, nothing more than a formal objection will be raised to a "punitive expedition" such as Japan sent against China three years ago. France, the traditional ally and protector of the African state, is apparently committed by the recent Rome agreement to give Italy a free hand, while Britain's interests appear to lie definitely on the side of Italy. The attitude of these two countries has been so obviously pro-Italian as to revive the rumor that the three powers have entered into a definite agreement along the lines of the 1915 treaty for the partition of Abyssinia, with the largest portion going to Italy as compensation for its failure to receive colonies at the close of the World War. It is possible, of course, that Il Duce is only blustering, but it seems unlikely that he would go to the trouble and expense of extensive mobilization merely for effect.

At first thought the United States would seem to be practically helpless to aid Abyssinia even if it desired to do so. It is not a member of the League, it is not committed by any multilateral pact to protect the integrity of Ethiopia, and it has no important commercial interests in that part of Africa. Yet precisely because it has no such political or economic entanglements it is in a peculiarly favorable position to exert moral influence against the sort of territorial brigandage which all nations have renounced in principle. The Kellogg Pact still stands as the supreme law of the nations. It has been violated and trampled upon by certain countries, but never without censure. This is the first time that a great European power has threatened to destroy the very existence of another sovereign state, signatory to that treaty. Irrespective of our recent isolationist tendencies, it would seem obvious that we have a very special responsibility as sponsor of the pact. If it becomes clear that actual warfare is threatened, there are several steps which could be taken, none of them involving the use of force. We might dispatch a strong note to both governments calling attention to the threatened breach of their agreement and suggesting mediation; and we might follow this with a summons to all the signatory nations for an immediate conference to discuss means of peaceful settlement. If these measures failed it would be possible under the recent arms legislation to obtain an embargo on the sale of arms to the aggressor nation. These steps may sound weak in view of the failure of the League's attempt at moral suasion in the Manchurian crisis, but in this particular instance the one thing that the powers least desire is open discussion of the matter. If the United States took the leadership in forcing such a discussion, it is quite possible that some way would suddenly be discovered whereby the controversy could be settled.

The Wolman Elections

THE protests of the American Federation of Labor against the Automobile Labor Board and its elections in Detroit have been dismissed in Administration circles as an example of sour grapes. Donald Richberg has told the Federation that it cannot expect to have any part in negotiating the terms for extension of the automobile code since the early returns from Detroit gave it only 5 per cent of the workers, while from 80 to 90 per cent registered themselves as unaffiliated. Just how are these elections conducted? Do they promote collective bargaining? Why have they been boycotted by organized labor?

The workers in each department of a plant are asked to nominate by ballot a man or woman to represent them. The worker may add the name of the organization to which his nominee belongs. In each department the two workers receiving the highest number of nominations are asked to be candidates in the election; they are also asked what organization labels, if any, they wish put after their names. The winners in the elections then constitute the plant committee. If the A. F. of L. is designated on, say, 10 per cent of the nominating ballots in a plant and the committee has nine or ten members, the board notes whether any elected member ran under the label of the A. F. of L.; if not, it adds to the committee the A. F. of L. candidate receiving the largest number of votes, thus securing "proportional representation."

In the first place, the Federation contends, it is an election of individuals, not of organizations, differing in this respect from other government-supervised elections. Conceivably, such an election of individuals could be a real battle between organizations. A union might pick candidates in each district, specifically instruct all its members to nominate these candidates and designate the organization; the union might also try to get the same specific instructions to workers who are merely sympathizers. But only by some such cumbersome procedure could the union get a complete count of its strength. It is not only unable to nominate its representatives directly, but it cannot prevent anyone who wants to from running as its representative. Such a "union" candidate, or even a real union member, may owe his election to non-union votes in his department. In any case the union has no control over him. His depart-

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ment, which he is supposed to represent, has no control either, since the board has made no provision for recall and has set up no procedure by which a department may instruct its elected representative. Under this arrangement, which places all the emphasis on the individual, there is no incentive for the workers to register their affiliation with a company union, the Federation, or any other organization. Any bargain the committee might conceivably make with the company would be based on the decision of its individual members. This is not collective bargaining. It is much closer to Mussolini's system of workers' syndicates.

Another important reason for the boycott lies in the fact that the works council, or "government union," which the Wolman board contemplates would have no more economic strength than a company union. It might adjust many grievances, since the company would find it judicious to cooperate, but it would not "represent" the workers, affiliated or unaffiliated, in the sense that they are represented by a union which is geared for strikes.

Why did almost all the men vote? Contrary to general practice, the elections were held *in the plants, during working hours.* In most cases the production lines were shut down so that the men could vote. The foreman—whom the NRA report paints as a powerful figure—could easily take note of any man who failed to vote. Also, the board sent its agent around to urge those who had not voted to do so. Only the reckless few would refuse.

Elections were devised as a sort of substitute for strikes. The present government policy in the automobile industry leaves labor only the strike as a substitute for elections.

Do the Justices Own Gold-Clause Bonds?

PROFESSOR CHARLES A. BEARD in his "Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States" has analyzed the interests which motivated the men who framed the Constitution and brought about its adoption. "The members of the Philadelphia Convention," he says, "were, with a few exceptions, immediately, directly, and personally interested in, and derived economic advantages from, the establishment of the new system." A hundred years from now, or sooner, some scholar following in Dr. Beard's footsteps will doubtless write a similar interpretation of the opinions of the United States Supreme Court. He will discuss our curious system of government by judicial decision, will interpret from the point of view of economic determinism the record of legislative acts sustained and outlawed, and will analyze the personal interests of our distinguished line of supreme jurists. He will find plenty of material in the social and business background of the judges to support a theory of economic motivation; but he will also find an impressive record of individual probity. It has been the habit of the judges not only to divest themselves before taking office of all possible economic connections which might impair their judicial impartiality but also to disqualify themselves from passing on specific cases in which, by reason of family or business or professional relationships, past or present, they might be suspected of any tinge of personal interest. In doing this the justices of the Supreme Court have acted according to the accepted dictates of the common law as well as many judicial decisions governing the disqualification of judges in lower courts. But then our future Professor Beard would stumble on the perplexing fact that in one of its most important cases, a case involving the constitutionality of acts abrogating the gold clauses in private contracts and government securities, the court proceeded to render a decision in spite of the obvious possibility that its members had a direct pecuniary interest in the outcome.

Under our present law it would be impertinent to ask whether any members of the court own Liberty bonds or other bonds containing the gold clause. But it is not impertinent to suppose for the purpose of this discussion that this is the case. The general assumption that before ascending the bench the justices divest themselves of the ownership of common or preferred stocks makes it highly probable that government and other bonds affected by the decision in the present cases form at least a part of their personal holdings. If this is so, can it be doubted that under a strict application of their own past rulings, any justices holding such bonds would have been disqualified from passing on the present cases? Perhaps the question sounds unduly legalistic. If the Supreme Court was not qualified to pass on the gold-clause cases, what body was? Must we appoint a bench composed of men without property in order to get a qualified decision? Or should the court have refused to review the decision of the lower court? *The Nation* would not drive the argument to any such ultimate absurdity. Under our existing legislative-judicial system it was necessary that the case be decided by a supreme tribunal. And we are not prepared at the moment to advocate a law prohibiting judges from accumulating and investing private fortunes. But neither are we so trustful as to believe that any set of men can fail to be affected, unconsciously if not knowingly, by their personal financial interests. It is an ancient legal maxim, founded in good morals, that no man should be judge in his own case.

The dilemma created by the gold-clause cases must have been in the mind of every member of the Supreme Bench. Undoubtedly the court dismissed the question of possible self-disqualification by invoking what is conveniently known as "the doctrine of necessity." Technical rules and the subtler sanctions of judicial ethics had to give way to the obvious need of a final adjudication. With this probable conclusion we have no quarrel. Our immediate concern is not with the question whether individual justices who may hold gold-clause bonds should have been disqualified. On the contrary we believe that the court was called upon to render an opinion. But in doing so the justices would have rendered a service by stating whether and to what extent they hold securities whose values might have been affected by their decision.

Nor is this all. We believe that the probable existence of a pecuniary interest on the part of the justices in a case on which they must none the less pass points to the need of federal and state laws which will make it obligatory upon all judges to disclose at regular intervals their personal security holdings. This practice would protect the judiciary from suspicion and embarrassment as it would the public from the possibility of hidden reasons for judicial bias.

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Issues and Men

England's New Ship Subsidies

THE news that England has again followed the bad example of other nations and passed an act subsidizing the owners of tramp steamers to the tune of $10,000,000 in 1935 is enough to make the leaders of the historic Manchester School turn in their graves. This is not parceling out money to steamships with regular sailings like the White Star-Cunard or the Royal Mail or the Castle Line. It is giving government aid to those venturesome shipowners who from time immemorial have had their ships range the seas picking up a cargo here, a half-load there, sometimes going around the world before returning to their home port. The very man who engineered this subsidy, Walter Runciman, president of the Board of Trade, bears the name of a family long famous in this sort of ocean trade. For at least one hundred and fifty years Runcimans have sent their ships out over the seven seas and kept pace with all the changes, from lumbering old armed brigs and East Indiamen, to clippers, to steamships, and now to oil-burning cargo vessels. His father and grandfather would have been shocked indeed at the suggestion that all the taxpayers of Great Britain should help them out in their trade. They could stand on their own feet, thank you. They had built up a magnificent organization, decade after decade. They had great technical skill and vast knowledge of world maritime conditions and knew all the tricks of the trade. That was the British government's chief reason for seeing that the technical staffs of these great shipping companies were not destroyed by the World War; it wanted them on hand after the war to pick up all the trade the Germans were to lose. Only in our own clipper-ship era from 1840 to 1861 were these British shipowners seriously challenged. Then the Yankee skippers outsailed them and out-bargained them, and turned their ships around in foreign ports in half the time of anybody else. For generations, of course, there has been real competition from Scandinavian shipowners, among whom, also, the continuing knowledge of the sea and its trade passed, in accumulating measure, from one generation to the other.

But now England has fallen from grace and gone a step farther than most other countries. We have built up line after line of regular passenger and freight ships by what are falsely called mail subsidies, paying ridiculous sums—no less than $300,000 in one case for the transportation of *four pounds of mail*—to lines for which there was no demand, which cannot possibly stand on their own feet, and which on the existing evidence will never be able to stand on their own feet. Our Postmaster General has finally revolted against this barefaced "honest graft" and a new outright subsidy scheme is scheduled to appear in Congress any day. We now pay out annually some $25,000,000, France pays about the same amount, Italy $15,000,000, and Japan $5,000,000. Just what Hitler is paying out to keep the German lines from collapsing it is hard to discover, particularly as there are constant shifts in the set-up; the North German Lloyd and Hamburg-American companies, after having been firmly married a year or so ago, have just been half-divorced. The British government has heretofore been content to advance money for shipbuilding, as it did years ago for the Mauretania and the Lusitania and is doing now for the Queen Mary. Of course Mr. Runciman's aid to tramps carries with it the stipulation that hopelessly antiquated freighters are to be scrapped and new and speedy ones built, and the owners have had to promise to cooperate for the good of all. But there the fact is—the National Government, which denounces everything socialistic, has begun to mix in private business in a way which usually leads to rigid control if not eventually to government ownership.

How insane it all is! Under the pretext that we must have a great merchant fleet to stand behind our navy in the next war we crowd the seas with ships that are economically unnecessary and, as Congressional inquiry has shown, are extravagantly and inefficiently run. The American taxpayers pay the bill. This in turn arouses bitter feelings in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, and the shipowners in those countries demand that their governments be just as "wise" and "helpful" as the American—and then their subsidies go up. It is all part of the world's crazy nationalism, so tremendously fostered by the World War. The pretense that American goods must be carried in American bottoms, French in French, English in English, is pure bunkum. We had no merchant fleet from 1865 to 1917, and not thrice in that long period were we really pinched by high rates and a dearth of available ships. Such losses as we had in 1914-15 would bear an interesting relationship to the sums we have squandered needlessly since we built our war fleet and began our subsidy policy.

The most serious feature of this kind of government aid is that it creates vested interests which speedily become intrenched and very powerful. Mr. Runciman, of course, assures the British public that this aid to shipping is only for a short time, that it is necessary because of disturbed world trade conditions. But those shipowners who profit will never willingly admit that trade conditions have become right for them again or that they can get on without Treasury aid. Our American shipbuilders and shipping men are already a dangerously powerful crowd—with the army and navy squarely behind them. Our tariff vested interests have dictated our economic life ever since 1880. England, too, will find how difficult it is to stop giving out government pap, if it ever tries to end its present tariffs. As to the ships, the Allies found no difficulty whatever in handling the fleets of the world as one in 1917-18, and supplying to every country, allied or neutral, its needed quota. Would not sane and sound statesmen bring about a similar pooling—plus a wise limitation of fleets—at least until this world economic crisis is over?

Oswald Garrison Villard

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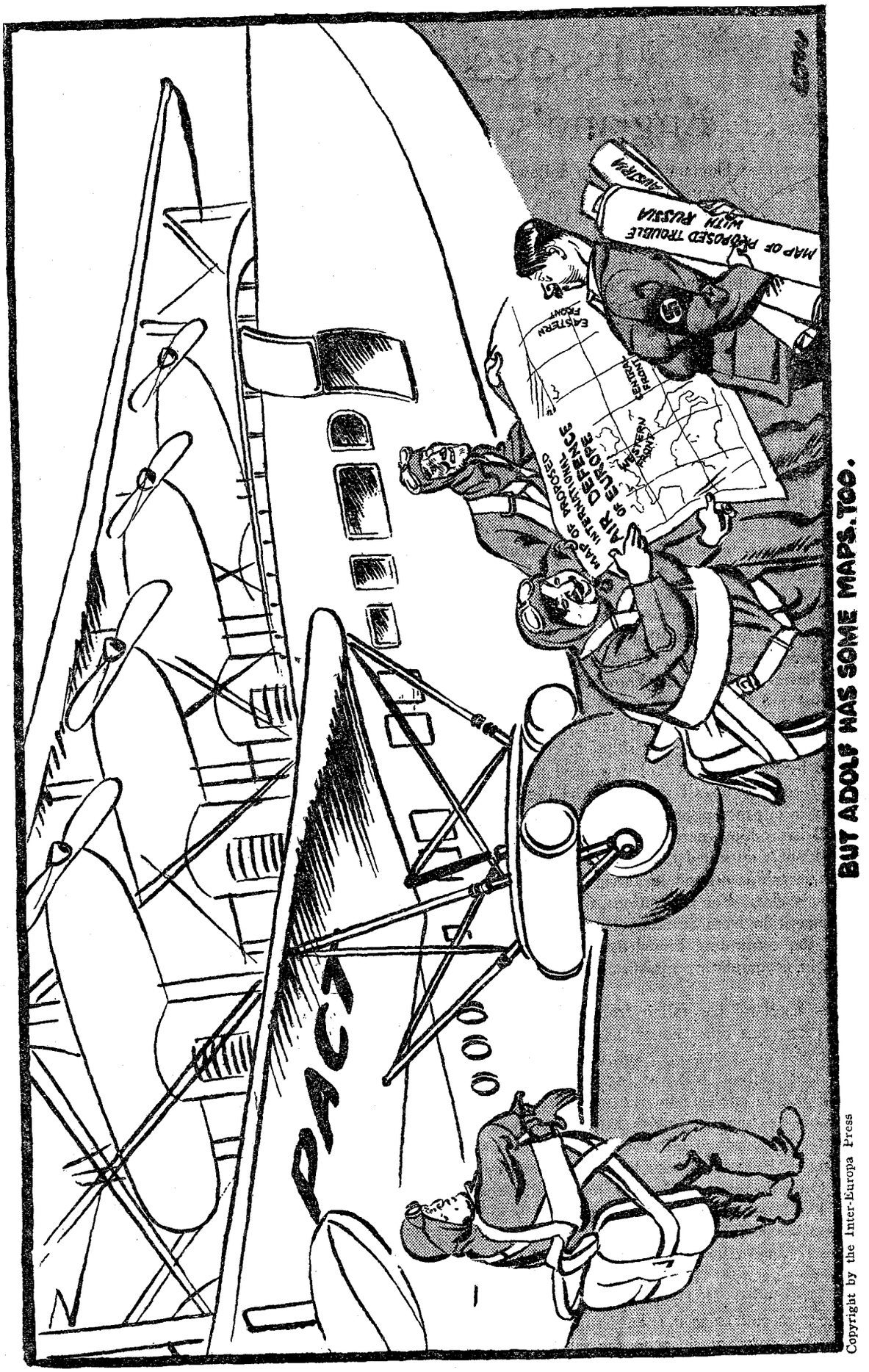
A Cartoon by LOW



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Pursuing a Prevarication

Washington, February 18

AT the time the automobile code was amended by the President, Mr. Richberg told the newspapermen that labor had been consulted. But beyond this generalization he would not go. Labor leaders, in particular Mr. Green, denied that they had been consulted. In reporting on this I assumed that Mr. Richberg was referring to some letters written by labor representatives to the White House as though they constituted a consultation and I called this a prevarication. I have been taken to task for this by Mr. Richberg, and quite rightly so. If there was a prevarication it was not Mr. Richberg's, and I withdraw the word as applying to him.

Mr. Richberg had been authorized to announce that labor had been consulted, and he believed it had. He believed the person consulted was William Green, president of the A. F. of L. With this fact to elucidate, I approached Mr. Green. He repeated his denial that he had been consulted. I explained that somewhere there was either a misunderstanding or a prevarication. Was it not possible, I asked, that the President had sent someone to him to tell him about the automobile code, and that he had consulted with this person not knowing it was an official consultation? No, said Mr. Green. What had happened was that he had discussed with Miss Perkins what labor wanted in the automobile code if it were extended. But it was not a consultation on the settlement which was adopted. Mr. Green was not told any of the terms of that settlement. He actually waited about, expecting to be called to the White House for consultation, and ultimately he learned the terms after the President had himself made the settlement and let it be announced.

Since Miss Perkins was out of town during the week-end, I could not question her. But from reliable quarters I learn that Mr. Green's account of his conference with her is correct. He met with her on Monday. He told her that labor would accept a forty-hour week, and time and a half for over time above forty hours. It wanted the merit clause expunged. It wanted the abolition of the Wolman board. Miss Perkins took these views to Mr. Richberg, who was running the negotiations with the automobile manufacturers. The day the code expired Miss Perkins had not heard from Mr. Richberg and tried to reach him by telephone. She called his office, she called wherever she thought he might be reached, she left word that she was trying to reach him. But Mr. Richberg did not telephone Miss Perkins. And that evening, after a reception at the White House, Miss Perkins herself learned the terms of the settlement from a newspaperman who questioned her as she was leaving. Not only was Mr. Green not consulted, but Miss Perkins herself was not consulted. And Miss Perkins later bore Mr. Green out in his assertion that his talks with her were not a consultation on the terms of the settlement.

Since this discussion between Mr. Green and Miss Perkins was the only official contact Mr. Green had, and since he had no opportunity to say whether he would accept the terms as finally adopted, it remains a prevarication to say that he was consulted. Who is author of the prevarication? Certainly not Miss Perkins. I have already absolved Mr. Richberg. But Mr. Richberg says he was authorized to make the announcement, so the prevaricator may be the person who gave that authorization. He did not tell me who it was, and I shall not press the pursuit any farther. It may turn out to be just one of those "misunderstandings." Mr. Green having told Miss Perkins what labor wanted, Miss Perkins having told Mr. Richberg, Mr. Richberg having told the President, the President may have felt sufficiently informed of labor's views. He even may have considered that labor had been consulted. But when it was announced that a settlement had been reached, and that labor had been consulted, the public was given the impression that labor had been consulted about the settlement. It was not. It is worth noting again that the President at his press conference the day after the settlement said nothing about a consultation that week. He referred simply to the month-old letters which had made labor's position plain to him.

* * * * *

In other words, the President had not bothered to consult labor about the settlement, and the fact is that he was in a position to disregard the American Federation of Labor. He had before him the results of the elections of the Wolman board. These make a bad showing for the unions. By February 14, out of 66,122 votes, the A. F. of L. had registered only 2,596, which is not to be explained away by the fact that the plants chosen for the early elections were the ones where the unions were weak or by the order of the A. F. of L. that its men should not participate. There are extenuating circumstances for the unions. For instance, the ballots are so made out that a vote for the union as such is not possible, the choice must be for individuals. And each ballot has on the corner a number which is supposedly torn off by the election officer. But the men believe that the number is used for identification, and that they will be punished if they vote the union ticket.

But the real truth is that the A. F. of L. has let the automobile industry go by default. Whatever organization work it has done has been timorous and dilatory. Only last week did it come to charter a federal international for automobile workers, and it went about this as if no lessons can ever be learned by old-time labor officialdom. Instead of allowing the new international to choose its own officers, it provided that provisional officers should be chosen by the Federation. And worse than that, instead of going out for a straight industrial union, it carefully separated machinists and maintenance men and kept them in craft unions. Here are two incredible blunders, which might discourage anyone, and certainly the President, about the ability of the A. F. of L. to cope with the problem of organizing labor in the America of today.

Nor is this a lone instance. The situation in steel would be humorous if it were not tragic. The tiny Amalgamated Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers' union, headed by Michael F. Tighe, has excommunicated the only lively membership of unions in the industry. It is not a case of the tail

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wagging the dog, but of the tail cutting off the dog. Tighe's little union, with perhaps 5,000 members (and at its peak with not more than 9,000), has dismissed lodges whose membership last spring was between 75,000 and 90,000. Tighe's conduct is according to the old principle of self-interest, for the new lodges would oust him the first moment they had a chance. Now he nestles back in the comfort of his sovereignty and defies even the Federation to do anything about it. The rebellious lodges rushed to Washington for last week's meeting of the A. F. of L. council, as though the Federation might somehow be interested not in formal affairs but in getting the steel industry organized. But out of eighteen council members only three voted for a clean-up, with the establishment of a new industrial union which relegated Tighe to a subordinate status.

John Lewis is interested in industrial unionism; so is President Green. The council set up a committee to deal with the problem, but it named A. O. Wharton of the machinists, by the nature of things an enemy of the industrial union, and Dan Tobin of the teamsters, who always is fighting to save his men from being absorbed by the brewery workers, and these two were charged to work with Lewis for a settlement. This move naturally failed, and now Green is to find a solution alone. There is a chance that he may discover someone around whom the rebel lodges will rally, and that Tighe can be induced to take some face-saving job, but it is no foregone conclusion. In any event time will be lost. The time to strike, if there is to be a strike, would be now, both in the steel and automobile industries. The best to be hoped for in steel is action in the autumn. And by then the company unions will have had two years to establish themselves. The same delay is being invited in the automobile industry. Mr. Green will address a big meeting in Detroit on February 23, but officially he still denies that the A. F. of L. will ratify a strike. The peak season in automobiles is nearing an end, and the companies can breathe freely. At the worst the A. F. of L. can provoke strikes in the auto-parts and assembly plants, but it will be too late to do great harm to earnings. By another year the company unions will be still more in favor, and their growth will be all the easier for the feeling now prevalent in the district that they are being sponsored by the government.

The A. F. of L. council meeting did not rise to the crying tasks before it. At least half its time was spent on the old wrangles over jurisdiction. Lewis and Green were actually chided for having attacked Mr. Richberg and appearing to be hostile to the Administration. The mentality of last year survives that the Federation somehow is part of the Administration, and is telling it where to go. So organized labor still clings to the running board of the New Deal, despite the face-slaps of the last month.

What this means is that unless rank-and-file disturbances break out, as they did last year, and set things in motion which develop a great natural momentum, the role of the A. F. of L. in wielding economic power for industrial workers has already pretty well played out. Industrial unionism was only recognized at San Francisco after a struggle, and then with no enthusiasm. For all practical purposes the field has been abandoned in both automobiles and steel, and even the gains made in forming an industrial union in the rubber industry are being sacrified by inaction. If these three fields are utterly lost, industrial unionism is lost with it, and only the craft unions remain. And by that token the great mass of industrial workers will be surrendered to company unions and a set-up which is one of the essentials of fascism. A chance remains that Congress will play Santa Claus for labor in the way that the President had been expected to do. It might pass the Wagner bill, even though the White House has declined to sponsor it. But the Federation is in want of a capable legislative agent, and cannot pretend to have organized its legislative efforts any more wisely than its affairs in automobiles and steel.

R. G. S.

A Talk with Phil La Follette

By LOUIS ADAMIC

Madison, Wisconsin

WHEN I visited him in the last days of January, Philip La Follette had been not quite a month in office in his second term as Governor of Wisconsin, and he was confronted by a difficult situation. There were of course the pressing problems of unemployment, taxation, and security for the farmer. There was the old question of public utilities. There was the immediate necessity of doing something about the school system, badly crippled by lowered appropriations during the Democratic regime. There was the plank in the Progressive Party's platform, on which Phil had been elected, for virtually outlawing company unions in Wisconsin; and "no La Follette ever broke a platform pledge."

Phil, I gathered, had very definite ideas on all these matters and several others coming up for consideration, but both houses of the legislature were controlled by conservative anti-La Follette Democrats and Republicans. The senate, in fact, was preponderantly anti-La Follette. And a fight between the young Governor and the lawmakers was just around the corner. Phil was at his desk in the Capitol fourteen, fifteen hours a day, overworked but in a cheerful mood. "In six weeks or so," he said, smiling, "we'll probably see what turn things will take." I surmised, not so much from what he said as the way he said it, that if the legislature decided to buck him and his Progressive program, he would go to the people, make a swing around the state, and deliver half a dozen speeches a day, as was the wont of his father—whose portrait faces him as he sits at his desk in the executive chamber—in similar situations. The legislature, in all likelihood, will buck him, and there is scant doubt that Wisconsin will be a very interesting state this spring, to say nothing of the rest of Phil's term as governor.

Meanwhile Phil is calm about it all, rather deliberately so, curbing his energy, ambition, impatience, and fighting proclivities, and—unlike other Progressives in Madison, whose

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views I reported last week—is not inclined to discuss 1936 or 1940, or anything else as remote and, at the same time, as specific as that. He is, as a matter of fact, not especially eager to talk about anything in particular. "There's been much too much talking in recent years about everything," he said—to quote him perhaps a bit freely.

He continued: "The country's been flooded with words and speeches, ballyhoo and blah, ideas and resolutions, theories and writings of all sorts, which for the most part have not clarified but only confused matters. Most of them have been no more related to the practical, urgent problems we face than is the metaphysical issue of how many spirits can dance on the point of a needle. . . . Understand, I'm not an anti-theorist; I'm not against ideas. I do my share of theorizing. Theory, of course, is necessary, but theories, discussion, resolutions are empty, futile, provocative of wasteful dissension if they do not soon lead to practical, constructive action. The important, the practical thing about the Wisconsin Idea has been—and still is—that it produced the Progressive movement, which has been—and is—dedicated to action, to doing things for the people, making for progress, not on some distant tomorrow but now, as soon as humanly possible; or perhaps I should say that the Wisconsin Idea and the Progressive movement developed almost simultaneously, one because of the other. It is no accident that nearly every forward-looking, concrete achievement in public affairs during the past thirty years has had its origin in action in Wisconsin. . . . Today, more than ever before in this country, we need action, the right kind. And we're going to have it in this state, in one way or another."

The manner in which he said this seemed to imply that he believed action was necessary in Wisconsin for the sake both of Wisconsin and of the United States. A while later, as our conversation continued, I became sure that this was what he meant to suggest. I gathered that his immediate ambition was to *do* things in Wisconsin along the old La Follette lines which would continue to make Wisconsin an example for other states and the country as a whole. Just what he would do or try to do, and how, he appeared unwilling to say. "There's been too much talk already," he repeated, smiling.

But he spoke freely of things in general.

He said that everything depended upon recovery, and the present effort for recovery on the part of the federal government was a race between time and the translation of federal plans into action. Too much delay might even bring collapse of a national effort for recovery, which might throw back upon states or sectional groups of states the burden of maintaining our civilization; he hoped, he hinted, to achieve things in Wisconsin during the next two—or the next four—years which would serve the other commonwealths as a model, a plan of action.

"Action" was a frequent word in his conversation. Somewhere in this connection he said rather suddenly: "Understand, I'm no soft, middle-of-the-road liberal. I'm a Progressive." And the vivid, sincere expression of his youthful face, with its high, straight forehead under the thick, graying pompadour, its shrewd nose, lively blue eyes behind spectacles, and quick, mobile mouth, seemed to add that he believed in progress with everything in him; that there must be progress, progress through aggressive, deliberate action; and there was nothing, or almost nothing, at which he would stop to achieve progress. We sat in his office at the Capitol. The night before he and Mrs. La Follette had given a simple party in the executive residence, during which some of us had become involved in a discussion of various political struggles and horrors in contemporary Europe. Phil now remarked to me: "I didn't cringe when you described the tortures inflicted upon revolutionaries in Yugoslavia."

Phil and I sat in silence after this and I looked at him for several moments, wondering what he meant. On the train from Chicago I had heard a man who told me he was a Milwaukee manufacturer refer to him by an unprintable name. The cab-driver who took me from the depot in Madison, when I asked him what he thought of the new governor, had said, "Oh, Phil's a great guy!" I had been hearing for years that Phil might become President some day. That he is ambitious one cannot doubt, looking at him; nor that he is a young man to be reckoned with.

Some time ago John Strachey declared in New York that he had interviewed Phil, I don't know just when, and that Phil's remarks to him had led him to the conclusion that Phil was a fascist—a potential American fascist leader. I mentioned this to Phil and said: "Some of us in New York were disturbed by Strachey's idea of you. What do you say about it?"

Phil smiled. "The trouble with these fellows from abroad is that they come here and look at America with eyes accustomed to pictures in the European pattern. They come to Wisconsin because someone in the East has told them about us here in the Middle West, and they visit me. They inquire about the peasantry in Wisconsin, and I tell them we have in this state a lot of farmers, whom we don't call peasants and who, I think, *are* somewhat different from the peasants in Europe. Well, in what way are they different? And I explain that our farmers here in Wisconsin own the land, some quite a bit of it, others less; and own pretty good homes and implements and farm machinery, trucks and flivvers, and so on. Whereupon my visitors from afar, experiencing a flash of insight, smile, and I'm told that these farmers are kulaks of course.

"I'm stunned by this; so the next question is about the workers, the class-conscious proletariat. I say that we have some workers in Wisconsin—not many, though—who describe themselves as class-conscious proletarians, in the European sense. The overwhelming majority of them, however, are just workers, citizens, not especially class-conscious or anything like that. In fact, I venture to say, they're not class-conscious at all. Most of them are Progressives. We get along fine. They're fine people. I know hundreds of them. They were here the other day for the inauguration, thousands of workers of all kinds. I was inaugurated governor, but it was their affair as much as mine. After the ceremony at the Capitol we had a reception at the executive residence, and they came and we shook hands and talked and had a great time.

"No, I say to my European visitors, most of our workers are not class-conscious in their sense, but like our farmers, who are in danger of losing their land and homes, and our teachers, whose salaries have been reduced, and our small-business and professional people, whose income has dribbled away, they're sharply conscious of the fact that they're being robbed by the system under which we live; and I add that

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I see no reason why I or any other radical—for I am a radical—should try to make them class-conscious. The idea of classes has no vital tradition in our American past, and in my opinion any effort to make them class-conscious would only confuse them, delay the whole thing, produce endless dissension among many who now have nothing against each other; for we Americans, I insist, *are* different from the Europeans. America *is* different from Europe. We in the North here skipped feudalism entirely, while Europe still has a terrible psychological hangover from it. For hundreds of years we were the freest people the sun ever shone upon. The frontier has influenced our minds, our manner in personal intercourse, our political methods. We're a democratic people if there ever was one. But there *is*, as I say, this sharp consciousness on the part of multitudes of our people that they are being ruined by the existing economic system, and I for one believe that to organize this consciousness is basically all we need as a start to bring drastic changes in our social-economic structure which will be in line with our American experience and tradition.

"I usually say all this to my brilliant visitors from abroad, and they, with their eyes used to gaze upon things and figures in the Old World pattern, swiftly decide that I'm a fascist. Fascism of some sort is not impossible in this country, but if I have any authority to say so, it will not develop out of the Wisconsin Idea and the Progressive movement. . . ."

A pause.

"Of course," Phil continued, "we are not Socialists. We Progressives don't agree with certain things in the Socialist program at all. But that, I maintain, does not make us fascists. The Socialists want collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution. If this idea were carried into action, our farmers (a farm is a 'means of production') would be deprived of the ownership of their farms and homes. They would become employees of the government. . . . We Progressives believe in the right of men and women to own their homes, their farms, and their places of employment. What we believe to be the curse of our present system is the greed of corporate and absentee owners. Our aim is to restore to those who work on the farm and in the city the ownership that has been wrung from them by the exploitation of private monopoly.

"In those great utilities of common necessity which cannot function efficiently except in centralized organizations we recognize the necessity of public ownership. Progressives believe that municipalities and other units of government should be encouraged to own and operate those utilities.

"We recognize the basic law of the margin of diminishing returns in size. Organizations, whether publicly or privately owned and operated, can be so large that their very size works against their efficient and satisfactory operation.

"There is no alternative to conscious distribution of income. To this end the Socialists and Communists advocate complete nationalization. Reactionaries advocate 'everybody for himself and the devil take the hindmost,' relying solely on the lure of private profit to entice investment in capital enterprises to diffuse the unexpendable income now received by the holders of great fortunes.

"The purely private investment of capital worked while frontiers still beckoned for development. But it is a failure when the great enterprises demanding investment are in the realm of housing, slum-clearance, education, and other phases of life here at home. Purely private capital will invest horizontally, but it will not invest perpendicularly. It will raise the standard of living on frontiers, but not at home.

"Nationalization of all property breaks down with the unmanageable task of administration. It is not theory that fails, but the definite limitation of the capacity of the human brain. We're a vast country, very complicated.

"The purely private investment of capital has failed. That failure has produced untold misery and suffering in this land of abundance. We Progressives hold that the alternative is not nationalization of all property or adherence to private monopoly. It is rather the assumption by government of the distribution of national income; or, in other words, the clear recognition of a new social obligation of property.

"The methods by which that distribution of the national income can be accomplished are not by any means limited to a single measure. There are the income tax, the inheritance tax, public ownership of necessary utilities such as light, heat, power, certain phases of transportation, central banks. But the basic law that Progressives recognize must be obeyed is the limitation of the capacity of human beings to administer units, whether privately or publicly owned, that are too large.

"It is one thing for the government to assume the function of distribution of income to support purchasing power and quite another to assume the administrative responsibility for millions of farms, every corner grocery store, and hundreds of thousands of factories."

How, I asked him, would or could all this change be brought about? He was not ready to particularize. I asked him if he didn't think any action in the direction of socialization would straightway collide with the Constitution, or rather with those who consider the federal and state constitutions static instruments designed to perpetuate the existing social order.

In reply Phil proceeded to give me his views of the Constitution as a factor in the matter, which in the main were a restatement of what he had declared in his brief inaugural address a few weeks before:

"The constitutions of this state and of the United States, which I swore to uphold on taking my office, are to me living documents. They embody the principle of American government. To preserve that principle is the supreme duty of our time. It is essential that we recognize the fact that this American principle of popular government, and the constitutions conceived to secure it, were not designed to sustain any particular economic system. The assumption made at one time that under the Constitution we were committed to the perpetuation of Negro slavery was the tragic error which produced the Civil War.

"Our paramount task is to maintain the kind of government which had its birth on this continent, which it took a Revolutionary War to establish, a Civil War to preserve, and a century and a half of day-to-day work on the part of countless men and women to put into operation as a functioning instrument—an instrument for realizing the great human end for which it was designed, the material and spiritual well-being of our people.

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"The founders of this country made their intentions clear, 'to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.' These, to my mind, are the chief concepts of our fundamental law, and it is our privilege today to give vitality—through action—to these concepts. It is our duty to apply them to the conditions of our time, and so prove loyal, in the truest sense, to our traditions. . . . This is the challenge of our times."

[*This is the second of two articles on the La Follettes by Mr. Adamic. Next week he will report on the possibilities of a strike in the rubber industry.*]

Men Who Make America's Gods

By LEFT WING

THE morning newspaper in a big city runs to about thirty pages, dividing its space in somewhat these proportions: news, ten pages; finance, seven pages; sports, five pages; advertisements, two pages; theater, music, and the movies, two pages; society, one page; shipping, one page; radio, one page; and a page devoted to women. In summer the amount devoted to sports is usually augmented by a page or two borrowed from other departments.

The sports section is one of the most important in the American newspaper of 1935. You can understand how important it is by observing that whereas a music critic with one assistant takes care of the activities of the concert field, a dramatic critic with a dramatic editor covers all openings even in Manhattan, and three or four competent or incompetent men compose the financial section, sport needs a staff all its own. An editor, an assistant editor, make-up men, reporters, specialists, and of course, a columnist are attached to every big newspaper. Whether it is situated in New York or Denver, the men in the sports department are often the best paid on the sheet and not infrequently they are the best writers, or at least, because of the latitude allowed them, the most amusing. The Great Names who run columns syndicated over the country have an enormous influence, their thoughts are household words, and during the height of the football season or at the time of a championship fight their mail rivals Mr. Farley's.

These are the men who make America's gods. Our gods are the heroes of sport—the one and only Babe, the perennial Mr. Tilden, the Deans of the College of Hard Knocks and Three-Base Hits, the track or hockey or golf sensation of the particular season. They are unimportant to you? Possibly, but remember that to millions and millions of your fellow-citizens who turn first to the sports pages when they open their newspaper they are the breath of life. The World Court? Unemployment? Rising taxes? Yeah, but what about the Babe, izzy gonna play nex' year or not? Yes, these are our gods, more important than Father Coughlin, more important than Roosevelt himself. Or even, yes, even than Rudy Vallée. And here are the men who make them.

Since the death of W. O. McGeehan, the head of the profession is Henry Grantland Rice. He graduated from Vanderbilt, where he captained the baseball team in 1901; after ten years on Southern newspapers he came north just before the war with an ability to turn out light verse to order, prose that at times came close to poetry, an unquenchable enthusiasm for things athletic, and a background in sports remarkable in a reporter. Certain phrases coined in his more ecstatic moments are now sporting classics; it was Rice who called the famous Rockne back field "The Four Horsemen," and nicknamed Grange "the Galloping Ghost."

A first-class newspaperman with a real flair for sports himself—he now shoots a low eighty at golf—he brought something far more valuable to the racket, namely, an inability to take sides on any question. For twenty years he has managed to remain impervious to the more violent hypocrisies of sport as practiced in Anglo-Saxon countries. The evils and abuses of the present system, which came to a peak in 1929 and have not yet by any means vanished, troubled him not at all. As the years rolled along he developed the technique of sitting on the point of a pin until it became a fine art with him. Whenever any controversy arose you could be sure that Grantland Rice would see both sides of the question. And embrace each with equal fervor. "While it is true that...yet, on the other hand..." His sports series in the movies and his syndicated column, filled every day with reams of nothing, have brought him universal respect and an income tax on $232,000 a year. R.I.P. Henry Grantland Rice.

With less reputation and more ability, Stanley Woodward of the New York *Herald Tribune* is one of the most improved sports writers of recent years. He played tackle at Amherst, had a long training in Boston, the home of good sports writing, and is today the most versatile man on the big time. He can turn out a thoroughly competent story on track, football, hockey, golf, rowing, or any branch of athletics; in recent years his work has gained in vigor and virility; and he has imparted a bite to his stuff that makes it the best of its kind in town. It was Woodward who coined the term "ivy colleges" to describe those institutions long on tradition but short on intellectual honesty like Yale, Harvard, and especially Princeton, which refuse to bid openly in the market for their footballists, but purchase them quietly on the side.

Paul Gallico of the *News* has ideas, he can write, and his column is burnished by a fine sense of humor. Like most daily stunters his work is uneven; when he's good no one is any better. The thing he did on the death of McGeehan was not only the finest of all epitaphs, it was the sort of thing McGeehan himself would have liked to write; and his interview with Helen Wills Moody in San Francisco last winter was one of the best pieces of sports reporting of 1934. An old Columbia oarsman, Gallico takes the trouble to learn something about those sports with which he is unfamiliar, and when he goes out to cover an event has an idea what it's all about.

There is hardly an honest boxing writer in the game. Dan Parker of the *Mirror* is one of the few. This small-

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town boy who showed the city slickers exactly how crooked the fight racket was knows boxing better than anyone, has a tremendous following, and deserves it. His verbal fisticuffs with James J. Johnston of the Madison Square hierarchy are classics. As becomes a Scotchman, Kerr Petrie of the *Tribune* knows golf and is one of the two best men on that sport in the United States. Richards Vidmer of the same sheet is an able all-round reporter who will admit under cross-examination that he was the model for the hero in Katherine Brush's best-seller of several years ago, "Young Man of Manhattan." Also in the collegiate vein are Laurence Perry of the Consolidated Press and George Trevor of the *Sun*. The latter is still a sophomore in college, but the former is a sophomore in high school given to lyrical outbursts, such as: "You all know how Notre Dame always goes to mass before every game, reverently, quietly, and as a matter of course. Years ago, it may be recalled, when Princeton had beaten Yale after a period of defeat running over four years, the eleven in the dressing-room after the game, stained with blood and mud, lifted their faces and sang the Doxology." This sacred moment when the sons of Old Nassau had their faces lifted was the only time on record that Mr. Trevor was out-trevored. He writes chiefly of football, on which he is an expert of long standing, and is read eagerly by infantile-minded college graduates of the metropolitan area, his rococo style fitting in well with the absurdities of intercollegiate football today. See below:

"For his swan song belligerent-jawed Bill will have a squad after his own heart, a bunch of untried novices to varsity football. These fiery Hotspurs champing at the bit will find Roper a magnetic, appealing taskmaster whose hard-boiled patina screens a kindly disposition." The fiery Hotspurs won only a single game, against Amherst, that year, but Mr. Trevor was undaunted. "Football is in the very air you breathe at Princeton. Those russet meadows, golden brown under the bright autumn sun, furnish an ideal patina for this greatest of games." Bismarck and Napoleon, Foch and Hindenburg, are allowed to be compared to his gods, while analogies of war are scattered through his columns. "The mud-encrusted Eli regulars troop in out of the wind-lashed rain, their cleats clattering like the hoofbeats of a cavalry squadron on cobblestones." And he suggests that "as the mothers of the world are looking toward Geneva for a solution of the war bogy, so the mothers of America are looking to E. K. Hall, chairman of the football rules committee, for an answer to the question, 'Can football be made reasonably safe for schoolboys?'" And it was Mr. Trevor who pointed out how Freddy Loeser, Yale center, ran behind the goal posts and planted a kiss, "the French accolade of valor," on the blushing cheeks of touchdown-scoring Albie Booth.

This is indeed the stuff to feed the troops. Do the troops like it? They eat it, for Mr. Trevor is by all odds the favorite sports writer of the college graduate in the East, a fairly emphatic indictment of the mentality of the average holder of an A. B. degree from an American university. He also writes on track in winter and golf in summer, but football is his specialty, his forte, his love; and at any given moment in April or May he is liable to burst forth with an analysis of the Notre Dame freshman team of 1940, with first names, weights, and ages of every player.

At the other pole is Joe Williams, sports editor of the New York *World-Telegram*. In addition to various other duties he syndicates a column that is never dull, for he knows sport and makes his own decisions. Mr. Williams is the hardest-working sports writer in the game; possibly his standard would be higher if he did not work so hard. Also on the *Telegram* is Charles Parker, former Dartmouth football star and rival of Mr. Vidmer as the hero of "Young Man of Manhattan."

John Kieran of the *Times* has a column unlike anyone else's, one that can invariably be depended upon for entertainment. He is distinguished from the majority of his colleagues by an education which he proves is no more a handicap in sports writing than in other walks of life. He sandwiches traces of a Gallic humor into his daily work, which he keeps to an amazingly high standard, avoiding the hated—by the *Times*—first-person pronoun in a deft manner.

"But he knew he had a good team?"

"'Sure,' said Mr. Thomas."

This sort of thing would be terrible by anyone except the light-handed Mr. Kieran. On the *Times* all sports are adequately covered by an enormous staff of specialists with a genius for being boring. The pages of the *Tribune*, less accurate but far more readable, are commanded by lovable old George ("my own college, Union,") Daley. He is so lovable that at times he is almost unbearable. His specialty is horses, but with no one to stop him he exposes himself twice weekly in a column. G. F. T. Ryall of the *Sun* is the leading turf authority; the most amusing is the talented Damon Runyon, whose column is syndicated to the Hearst papers throughout the country, although occasionally one wishes he would not reserve quite so much of his talent for the slick-paper magazines. Other Hearst headliners include Jack Koefed, whose "Thrills in Sport" are often more thrilling to writer than reader, and Bill Corum, another columnist who would probably not deny, if you pressed him with it, that he was the hero of Katherine Brush's best-seller, "Young Man of Manhattan."

John Lardner, son of the mighty Ring, runs a column syndicated in the *Post* which is good but not as good as it will be if he sticks around longer. The *Post* formerly had two so-called experts, Robert Harron, a minor-league Grantland Rice, and John R. Tunis, an unhappy highbrow among the lowbrows. Both have been unemployed since the paper was purchased by its present owner. Alan Gould, sports editor of the Associated Press, knows most games, and thanks to a large staff gives adequate coverage, although the work of his boys is often mediocre. Among the best sports men on the large associations is Henry McLemore of the United Press, who adds life and vitality to everything he touches. Outside New York Bill Cunningham of the Boston *Post* and Ed R. Hughes of the San Francisco *Chronicle* deserve mention among others for vigorous writing and thinking on their feet.

These, then, are a few of the men who make America's gods. Any one of them overnight can turn an obscure halfback on a college eleven or a winning distance runner into a national celebrity. The cumulative effect of the writings of men like Abramson on track and Woodward on hockey has helped sell these sports to the clients; they could do the same thing with rope-skipping if they wished. That rackets like wrestling and prize fighting have not been sent to their grave long ago is due to the fact that most sports writers

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who cover them and more than one sports editor prefer to sell themselves to the authorities in charge.

There is probably more downright graft passed out in the sticks where salaries are smaller and the gravy more necessary, but even in the big time the rank and file are not always incorruptible. The honest ones as often as not are lazy, sitting around explaining that Broun was once a sports writer, so what the hell, hey? Salaries range from $750 or $1,000 a week for the leading columnists to $250 or $300 for names like Trevor's or Woodward's, and on down to $40 or $50 for a copy reader to check their mistakes and do the dirty work on the desk.

Although sport is a comparatively simple phase of modern existence and hardly needs years of experience, study, and background, as do other departments in a newspaper, even among the leaders in the field there are few who know their subjects as W. J. Henderson knows his; since the death of Pegler there is no one as vital as George Jean Nathan or as amusing as Robert Benchley, and hardly anyone who understands sport the way Lawrence Gilman understands music. With the exceptions noted earlier, the majority have conventionally grooved minds quite incapable of original thinking, while only a mere handful of them have any independence and still fewer possess the slightest degree of moral courage, or are willing to write of things as they see them and not as the customers want. Hired as specialists at large salaries, with more freedom than anyone else on the paper, they are a gang doing an intellectual goose-step, and their best efforts amount to a dozen really good pieces a year. No wonder the gods they make for America are nitwits like themselves.

PERSONAL. To Westbrook Pegler. Please come back to Sportland. All will be forgiven. FATHER AND THE BOYS.

Congress Discovers the Class Struggle

By MAXWELL S. STEWART

Washington, February 13

ALTHOUGH the President's security program is still in the early stages of legislative consideration, it has already become apparent that the principal opposition will not come from embittered diehards who fear lest the idle become "demoralized." Many who took this position a few years ago are now pleading for a genuine national plan of unemployment insurance as a means of guaranteeing business stability; the remainder are strangely inarticulate. To judge by developments thus far, the attack will be almost exclusively from the left, from the ranks of the common people who have been angered or bewildered by the chasm which exists between the President's words and his deeds.

The press has played up the rather pathetic but significant efforts of the supporters of the Townsend plan to substitute their pet nostrum for the old-age provisions in the Wagner-Lewis bill. While they appear to have been laughed out of court on this particular occasion, every Congressman fervently prays that their plan may never reach the floor of the House. If it does, only a brand-new set of Congressional spinal columns can prevent its passage.

On the real threat from the left, however, the press has been strangely silent. During the past week Washington has been treated to the unique spectacle of two Congressional committees conducting hearings on what are essentially rival measures. For strategic reasons the Wagner-Lewis bill was not referred to the Labor Committee of the House, as was normally expected, but was intrusted to the powerful and conservative Ways and Means Committee. The hearings of this committee have been well covered. But when the Labor Committee, irritated to the point of filing a unanimous protest against the Administration's steam-roller tactics, instituted counter-hearings on Representative Lundeen's Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, the press exercised its traditional freedom by ignoring it. And in so doing it has overlooked one of the most remarkable social developments of recent years.

Beyond the general subject of inquiry the two hearings have had little in common. Even the setting has seemed to accentuate the basic differences between the conflicting security proposals. As befitted its rank, the Ways and Means Committee conducted its hearings in the caucus room of the new House office building, where the members of the committee were ensconced on a semi-circular platform, aloof and remote from the crowd. Witnesses were at a physical disadvantage, standing below the committee with their backs to the audience. Though there was little pretense at dignity, the atmosphere was heavy. In the caucus room of the old House office building, where the Subcommittee on Labor is conducting the hearings on the Lundeen bill, far greater informality, even friendliness, was displayed. Members of the committee, secretaries, witnesses, reporters, and interested spectators were seated rather indiscriminately around a table, yet there was an earnestness that contrasted with the cut-and-dried proceedings of the other hearing.

These distinctions were particularly evident in the testimony. The Ways and Means Committee began by hearing various members of the Administration—Dr. Edwin Witte of the President's Committee on Economic Security, Secretary Perkins, and Harry Hopkins. It also heard Samuel W. Reyburn and Albert D. Hutzler, appearing for the National Retail Dry Goods Association, together with representatives of various civic organizations, proponents of the Townsend plan, and several advocates of the Lundeen bill. Herbert Benjamin, one of the spokesmen of the latter group, was forcibly ejected when he sought to speak more than ten minutes. Much of the testimony was excellent, but it was contradictory and confusing. Across the street, at the other hearing, the witnesses were chiefly workers, farmers, transients, and representatives of the unemployed, with a sprinkling of experts to analyze the technical aspects of the Lundeen bill. Probably never in American history have the underprivileged had a better opportunity to present their case before Congress.

Among the witnesses was a young textile worker from

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North Carolina who had been blacklisted for union activity. His trip to Washington had been paid for by a collection of pennies, nickels, and dimes from employees in the textile mills. He appeared before the committee without having prepared a written statement, and vanished as suddenly as he had appeared before anyone could discover whether he had funds for the return journey. Though he spoke in the low monotone characteristic of the "poor white" of the South, his voice carried conviction as he described the plight of the textile workers under the New Deal:

> In the mill I worked in before the NRA came into effect the weavers ran four looms. Now they run six and eight looms for about the same wages they made on the four looms, and they must get production and quality or they will lose their jobs. . . . And as for the houses the mill company furnishes—just shacks built on a red mud hill, with red mud roads, and in many cases cracks you could throw a cat through. We have to pay an average of 50 cents a week a room for these shacks. . . . In most cases the mills don't have shacks enough to accommodate all their help. There are large families now living in tobacco barns near the mill town because they can't pay the high rent of the private home-owners. . . .
>
> The same twenty-four-pound sack of flour that cost us 50 cents per sack less than two years ago now costs us $1.15. Pinto beans sold at 5 cents a pound less than two years ago; now they sell for 12 cents a pound. Fatback meat was 6 cents a pound . . . now we pay 22 cents a pound. These prices are still going up . . . but we don't see any reports of our wages going up here in North Carolina. . . .
>
> The unemployed in North Carolina are not assured of emergency relief. If we are, we have to dig ditches and bust rocks with a heavy hammer for eight hours a day. We get 30 cents an hour and either we work or we don't get anything to eat. We almost have to fight the gang foreman to get one day's work a week. . . .
>
> The mill bosses don't tell us now that if we join a union they will fire us. But they are firing all the union members they can find out about, for some reasons that would be hard to see with the eye. But they get away with it.

Another representative of the South was Broadus Mitchell, son of one of its best-known educators and himself associate professor of political economy at Johns Hopkins University, who delivered a scorching indictment of the Wagner-Lewis bill as a grudging "compromise with poverty," dominated by "the idea of dearth and the menace of scarcity."

A picture of life in the transients' camps was presented by Joseph Murray, representing the transients' rank-and-file committee. He asserted that the quarters were unsanitary, overcrowded, improperly heated and ventilated, that the food was consistently of poor quality and the medical service inadequate. He spoke bitterly of cash wages of a dollar a week for thirty hours' work, and declared that thousands of transients were kept perpetually on the move in the vain hope of finding better conditions or paying jobs. Three days after his testimony was given, his charges were tragically confirmed by an outbreak of spinal meningitis which claimed eight victims in the Washington transients' camp. The lot of the unemployed seamen as described by Earle Payne of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union is equally desperate. When they are temporarily or permanently out of a job, their only resort is to soup kitchens and flop-houses of the lowest type, where they are frequently terrorized by hired thugs. Payne pointed out that by the very nature of their occupation few seamen would be benefited by a contributory unemployment-insurance system such as is proposed in the Wagner-Lewis bill.

So it went through the list of occupations and professions. The problems of the farmer were graphically portrayed by Andrew Omholt, a member of the United Farmers' League, who showed that an adequate system of social insurance meant a vast increase in the consumption of farm products. Louis Weinstock, speaking for the more than 2,500 A. F. of L. locals which have indorsed the Lundeen bill, declared that the majority of the rank-and-file members of the federation support it despite the opposition of the officials. Elmer Rice, playwright, told the committee that the Lundeen measure is the only one of the pending bills which offers any real protection for authors and writers, and R. M. Sentman made a similar assertion with regard to architects and engineers. Several Negroes testified concerning the discrimination against their race, pointing out not only that their ratio of unemployment was much higher than that of whites, but that the relief given them was consistently lower.

There was no mistaking the bitterness of these witnesses toward the Wagner-Lewis bill. The principal complaint was that it fails to provide for those now in need. Nor was there any faith that the government works program now under consideration would care adequately for this group. In addition, many of the witnesses opposed the federal-state scheme on the grounds that migratory labor would be severely penalized and that state legislation would almost certainly lack uniformity. Other criticisms centered about the limited scope of the bill and the meagerness of its benefits. The tax on payrolls was opposed, both because it would be passed on to the public in higher prices, and because of its dubious constitutionality.

The question of the constitutionality of the rival measures seemed particularly to interest the committee. It appeared to accept the view contained in the brief submitted by Leo J. Linder, which upheld the soundness of the Lundeen bill on the grounds that (1) it represents a proper exercise of the appropriating power of Congress, (2) it involves no unconstitutional delegation of legislative power, and (3) since it is to be financed by a tax on income, it cannot be said to deprive persons of their property without due process of law. The Wagner-Lewis bill was held to be much more open to attack because its payroll tax might be construed as an invasion of the field of intra-state commerce.

In analyzing possible sources of funds to finance the Workers' bill, Dr. Joseph Gilman of the City College of New York declared that if the tax rate used in England had been in operation here in 1928, the federal government would have collected five times as much in income tax as was actually obtained. This would have given an additional $4,250,000,000 to devote to social purposes. Even on the basis of the much lower income of 1933 the increase would have been $1,129,000,000. A flat 25 per cent tax on corporation profits over $5,000 would have yielded $2,600,000,000 in 1928. A similar tax on inheritances would have yielded $888,000,000 instead of the $42,000,000 which was actually

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collected. In 1933 this tax would have amounted to more than a half-billion dollars. While considerably larger sums could be obtained by increasing the rates in the high brackets in each instance, Dr. Gilman felt that a flat tax on corporation surpluses would be socially more desirable. At 25 per cent such a tax would have yielded nearly ten billion dollars in 1933.

The one-sided nature of the hearings on the Workers' bill does not necessarily mean, of course, that the Labor Committee will report it favorably to the House. But if the hearings have no other effect, they should at least reveal to Congress the essential difference in viewpoint between the business executive and technical economist on one side and the rank-and-file worker on the other. Comparatively few of the workers, it is true, are articulate on the question of security. The testimony revealed that American Federation of Labor officials have frequently gone to great extremes to prevent adequate discussion of this basic issue within the organization. But where such discussion has occurred, labor has almost invariably indorsed the Lundeen bill.

It is difficult to see how anyone could read the testimony which has been given without being convinced of the inadequacy of the Administration's security program. The Wagner-Lewis bill may be actuarially sound and it may represent a great advance over the chaotic measures of relief which have been adopted in the present crisis, but it is a far cry from the security for the men, women, and children of the nation which the President declared last June to be the primary objective of his Administration. The Lundeen bill, on the other hand, may have all the defects which its critics allege, but it has come to symbolize for the underprivileged workers of the country that protection against the vicissitudes of modern life which Mr. Roosevelt declared to be essential. Encouraged by the President's words, the fundamental urge for security, long repressed as radical or un-American, has emerged as one of the most powerful forces of present-day political life. Congress, like the press, can ignore it, but only at the risk of political suicide.

In the Driftway

FROM time to time the Drifter, like every other person to whom writing is a profession, receives a manuscript to read. The author, almost always unknown to him—and to the public at large—begs that he will be so kind as to peruse this little work and advise said author, first, as to the best means of marketing same, and, second, what faults, if any, of style or content it may possess. Like the famous letters which Mark Twain wrote to people who bored him and then never sent, a missive has been composed by the Drifter for this occasion. It reads something like this:

> DEAR SIR (or Madam): A glance at your manuscript has convinced me of what I suspected before I even glanced—that it is without merit. If I were without other means of support I should charge you for this opinion a sum commensurate with the years of professional training and practice that enable me to form it. But I give it free. There are, of course several dozen publishers in New York City alone—you will find their names in the telephone book—who will doubtless be only too happy, on receipt of your manuscript accompanied by return postage, to send you a similar opinion.

This letter the Drifter keeps in the left-hand top drawer of his desk and when he has just bought postage for and dispatched one of the unfortunate manuscripts to its author, accompanied by a polite note containing a considerably more Milquetoast version of his opinion of the work and a revelation of how manuscripts reach publishers, he takes it out and reads it through. But it will never be mailed. And in that he suspects that he is no different from ninety-nine out of a hundred literary persons who are often similarly besought.

* * * * *

ONE such letter, however, did actually burn its flaming way through the mails. It was written some sixty years ago by the poet George Boker to his friend, the poet Bayard Taylor. The letter itself, which the Drifter quotes from *American Literature* for November, 1934, did not contain the poison except as it repeated a speech made by a lady to half a dozen poets, one of them her husband and the others guests in her house. Boker wrote:

> Lizzie, Dick, and one or two others and myself were sitting together one night in the rooms of the Pythoness when suddenly she broke forth in her usual oracular manner. "George, you Dick, Bayard, Stedman, Aldrich, Read,* the whole of you youngsters, have all been dreary failures as poets. Not one of you has won even a third-class position as a poet. There is not one of you who can justly lay claim to popularity, in any true sense of the term. You have not even attained to such a position as is held by that weakling, Longfellow. . . . It was not time that you lacked to become known, but poetic ability. The world is not unappreciative of real genius, as you flatter yourself is the case, only you are not up to the required standard. You are all failures, and the sooner you stop writing the things no public will read, the better your peace of mind. Is not this truth?" she said, turning to me sadly. "God's truth," my lips and conscience cried with one voice. "God's truth," echoed poor Dick, with his heart's sickness in his face. "I, you know, have given up writing verses with any hope of success. My poems are jobs now." "Damned bad jobs," muttered our comforter.

* * * * *

IT is of course God's blessing that this sort of thing does not happen often. Indeed, the Drifter is obliged to confess that after he had read it he at once destroyed the specimen letter he never meant to send, for fear by some mischance it might get put into the mailbox by a conscientious hand, not his own. There was never a better example of how unbearable the truth is. For Mrs. Stoddard said what time has proved; and probably her listeners heard time's verdict ring out with her words. Nevertheless, the Drifter is glad he was not present. And he has no doubt whatever that truth of this sort in such terms should not be spoken. This raises a nice ethical point that some of his readers may be interested in; but he begs them not to write their thoughts in the form of a longish book and send it to him for a literary opinion.

THE DRIFTER

* Lizzie—the Pythoness—and Dick were Mr. and Mrs. Richard Henry Stoddard; Stedman was Edmund Clarence Stedman, editor of the familiar anthology; Aldrich was Thomas Bailey Aldrich; Read was Thomas Buchanan Read, author of at least one famous poem, "Sheridan's Ride."

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Correspondence

A Picketing Playwright Replies

To the Editors of The Nation:

In the editorial Picketing Playwrights, in *The Nation* for February 6, after summarizing the charge made by Virgil Geddes and myself that the Theater Guild makes gestures toward new writers but makes no consistent effort to produce their plays, you said:

> A check of its [the Theater Guild's] record shows that during the present and the preceding seven seasons it has produced fifty-three plays. Of these, twenty-seven were by American writers, and eight of these twenty-seven were by dramatists whom the Guild was introducing for the first time to a New York audience.

This would seem to be a more or less effective refutation of our charge. It has impressed many who have read it. It has seemed so effective to the Theater Guild that a tear-sheet of *The Nation* has been sent to at least one inquiring subscriber with this rather odd explanatory letter:

> My dear ———:
>
> I am sorry there has been so much delay in replying to your letter of January 22 concerning the authors who picketed various Guild theaters. I did not wish to write you until the Guild decided on its policy as to a reply. At present we have made no reply to these so-called charges.
>
> A fair and unbiased statement has been made about the case in *The Nation*. Though this statement does not entirely represent our point of view or state all the facts, I am inclosing a copy of it just in case you haven't read it.
>
> If later the Guild decides to issue a statement I will see that a copy is sent you.
>
> [Signed] Warren P. Munsell, Business Manager.

Your figures gave me a jolt. Reaching hastily for my trusty pamphlet, "The History of the Theatre Guild, 1919-34," also recently mailed to inquiring subscribers and forwarded to the picketing playwrights, I checked the record, then rechecked it. I found that during the present and the preceding seven seasons the Theater Guild has produced forty-four (not fifty-three) plays. Of these, twenty-three (not twenty-seven) were by American writers, and only three (not eight) of the twenty-three were by dramatists whom the Guild was introducing for the first time to a New York audience. (Among these three was "Porgy," a dramatization of the best-selling novel. The Guild, in listing "Red Rust" and "The House of Connelly" among its productions, admits in notes set in six-point type that neither was a Guild production for subscribers. The Paul Green play was produced by the Group Theater after it had been kept in the Guild icebox for five years.) Three introductions in eight seasons prove our charge.

The methods of a certified public accountant may not be best for an evaluation of the Theater Guild's boasted record as "the foremost producing organization in the American theater . . ." which remains "today primarily an experimental theater." But it may be worth while to break down the statistics a little farther. Of the twenty-three American plays, six were by Eugene O'Neill (who had twenty-eight productions before he went to the Guild); four were by Maxwell Anderson; three were by S. N. Behrman. In the past eight years one Guild production has been given to each of the following authors or teams: Philip Barry (nurtured by Arthur Hopkins, who gave productions to Sidney Howard, Maxwell Anderson, Lynn Riggs, and others before the Guild got round to do so), Robert Sherwood, Owen and Donald Davis, John Wexley, Riggs, Dawn Powell, the Siftons, the Bruce Goulds, the DuBose Heywards, and George O'Neil. Of these Barry, Sherwood, the Davises, and Wexley were established and successful; Riggs, Powell, and the Siftons had been produced; the Goulds, Heywards, and O'Neil had not.

I don't want to prove too much. It would not be difficult to show that while the Guild has been aware of new writers in its subscription advertising, in its production schedules it has been more timid, more conventional, *less experimental* than any one of a half-dozen "commercial" producers making no pretensions to art, issuing no prospectuses soliciting subscriptions for "six plays to be chosen from a list including . . ." Geddes and I indicted the Guild because we believed the Guild was guilty and vulnerable. It is guilty of timidity and bad judgment. It is vulnerable because its directors have good intentions. (They yearn for the seasons when "box-office" plays will give them economic elbow room to do "the plays we'd really like to do," but, like tomorrow, the arrival of that season becomes more and more improbable.) The Guild is vulnerable through its subscribers, who have been promised the moon and the stars regularly each season and have been handed somewhat less—less even than the best the Guild had in its icebox.

We went to the trouble of making this indictment, at some sacrifice, because we thought it worth while to focus attention and thought upon the pretensions of the Guild as contrasted with its performances and thereby perhaps to impel the Guild either to promise less or deliver more. We have accomplished the first part. Whether in an artistic sense the Guild will be more honest with itself and with playwrights and audiences in the future than it has been in the past only the Guild directors can decide. Perhaps Hollywood will give the three directors until recently in residence there the requisite courage.

New York, February 12 Paul Sifton

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Labor and Industry

"Confessions of an Opium Eater"

By HEYWOOD BROUN

WHEN the Democrats met in convention in the summer of 1932, I was in the press stand as a news commentator. The various tricks and devices used to promote the fortunes of the contestants appalled me. In particular the alliance of Hearst, Huey Long, and McAdoo in behalf of Franklin D. Roosevelt seemed to me unholy. And I am not forgetting Farley. So in the heat of righteous indignation I did a column which began, "If Franklin D. Roosevelt is nominated he will be the corkscrew candidate of a crooked convention." This was somewhat too strong for the editor who was handling the wire for New York. It appeared in milder form at home. Unfortunately, if you please, both the editor and I forgot that I had already sent a carbon to a small Chicago tabloid which was taking the service. Maybe it had no copy readers. Anyhow the sentence got in as written.

The Al Smith forces liked the literary style and spread it through the convention hall in the form of a handbill. This special prominence which I received returned to plague me after the election. In the first place, Mr. Roosevelt did many things which seemed to me forthright, bold, and altogether admirable. I believe I publicly ate my words in a newspaper column. That was a mistake. At any rate it would be pleasant to be able to have your columns and eat them too.

Early in the administration President Roosevelt consented to meet a committee from the American Newspaper Guild. I was a member of the delegation and probably the most trepiditious of the lot. As we were leaving, Franklin D. Roosevelt gave me full face the famous Roosevelt smile and held out his hand saying, "I didn't always think so, Mr. Broun, but I now feel that you are one of my most understanding interpreters."

And so I went away filled not so much with understanding as with admiration. Here was the most charming man I had ever met in my life, and by a coincidence he was also the President of the United States, which did not war against his glamor. Not long afterward another Guild committee was received at the White House. There were only three of us this time, and I remember finding Mr. Roosevelt among the most proficient of all listeners I had ever encountered. It was actually easier to talk to the President of the United States than it has been on many occasions to hold converse with Howard Davis or Roy Howard.

But there was one disturbing incident which marred the meeting. To be precise, it did not come up until we were leaving the White House. I said to another guildsman, "Well, we certainly made great gains for the Guild in that conference."

"Like what?" inquired my companion curtly.

"Don't you remember," I said with enthusiasm, "that he promised us three out of the four points we brought up."

Jim looked at me in amazement. "The trouble with you, Heywood," he said, "is that you've been away from regular newspaper work too long. You're a rotten reporter. Think back about what happened. You got very steamed up about the case you were presenting. You felt that everything you said was fair and right. You were sitting just across from the President and you began to pound your fist on the table and Roosevelt looked across at you and grinned and nodded his head. And every time he nodded you thought he was making a promise. He was only saying, 'Go on, I'm listening.' He promised us nothing."

In the light of later events Jim was quite correct. No promises had been made. Mr. Roosevelt had merely listened with great interest. It may be said in his favor that he listens to very many people explaining very many theories. They go away satisfied with his cordiality. And this cordiality is a habit-forming drug. Labor leaders are still taking the Roosevelt smile and waking up with something like the automobile code. Unfortunately the worker in city room or shop is not warmed by that smile. He wasn't there. He has to take it second hand, and a second-hand smile is one of the shoddiest shelters ever presented to a shorn lamb to temper the wind.

So great is the charm of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that it inspires all his associates. One may walk for miles through the long corridors of the Commerce Building and receive nothing but cordiality. Even now organized labor is not quite aware of the nothingness. It is inclined to play into the President's hands by being sidetracked into violent assault upon every stooge of the Administration. The befuddled spectator believes he is watching a whole cast of characters. He cannot comprehend that it is all done by ventriloquism.

Under the haze of the opiate a play unfolds before our enraptured eyes. When I was using the stuff this play was slightly reminiscent of "Nelly the Beautiful Cloak Model," only the victim was a man and not a woman. He was forever being deceived. General Johnson deceived him. Leo Wolman deceived him. Donald Richberg deceived him. At this point my conscious mind broke through the fumes and I awoke.

I had come a long distance through a fog, and the only thing which kept me going was a magic sentence which I got from a coal miner. I repeated it over and over again until I was clear of the maze. It runs, "How in hell could Don Richberg deceive anybody?"

Well, I'm off the stuff now. At least I hope so. Charm is a drug with a kick in it. Maybe a couple of drops in a glass full of water wouldn't hurt you. Perhaps it would help to take just a pinch of this charm away from the White House, where there is such abundance, and add a teaspoonful to the codes, which haven't any.

[*This is the third of Heywood Broun's lively comments on labor in the reign of Roosevelt which appear every week in* The Nation.]

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Nick Bins, Kidnapper

By HANS CHRISTIAN

Racine, February 15

FOR many years Racine, the second largest city in Wisconsin, has been a center of political unrest and scandal. Heavily industrialized, the town has always been controlled by the large employers and bankers. They own the only daily newspaper and dictate to public officials. Somehow they have succeeded in keeping the door closed on most of the city's skeletons. It is precisely because there is so much in Racine's history and make-up of which it is less than proud that a single cleverly staged and dramatically executed exposé by a group of Milwaukee intellectuals has thrown the city's masters into a state bordering on hysteria.

The depression years brought even more jittery unrest than usual to Racine. With thousands of workers thrown out of employment at the large mass-production plants, the field was fertile for strong labor-organization growth. In 1934, as the promise of the New Deal was dissolved in the ambiguity of Section 7-a, a militant Wisconsin Emergency Relief Administration workers' union spread to many plants, conducted fifteen strikes, five of them important, and then fizzled out in political disunion as its opportunist leaders ran for public office. Nevertheless, many of the strikes were successful. Wage increases were won. A sort of united front from below was achieved by Socialists, I. W. W.'s, Communists, and the unemployed.

As the strikes continued and the open-shop solidarity of which the employers had been so proud began to break up, a vigilante movement slowly got under way. With the elections over, relief standards were sharply cut and W. E. R. A. workers were virtually all discharged. Under the double impetus of the American Legion's national anti-radical drive and a number of impressive mass demonstrations by the unemployed, the vigilante movement developed strength. As in Germany, the Communists became the scapegoats.

Constantly urged to more vigorous action by poorly disguised editorials in the manufacturer-owned *Journal-Times*, the vigilantes started a wave of terror through the more radical labor and unemployed ranks. Demonstrations at relief stations were broken up by vigilantes openly slugging side by side with the police. The Communist downtown headquarters were raided and wrecked. Other offices were bombarded with bricks. Radical leaders were followed at night by mysterious cars without license plates. Chief of Police Grover C. Lutter, in disgrace with the civic leaders because of his pitiful showing in a Dillinger bank raid, declared open war on Communists, flatly refused to permit them to meet, said he would make Racine "a white town."

The local Legion post pledged its "moral and physical force if necessary to stamp out communism," and blocked an ordinance that would have prohibited the use of tear gas in labor disputes. The Racine Bar Association urged prison sentences for "agitators" and evolved a formula to circumvent the lack of a criminal-syndicalism law. The *Journal-Times* fairly smacked its lips over "the great achievements by right-minded citizens."

Then Samuel Herman, Communist organizer, was kidnapped in mid-day on a downtown street, severely beaten, and dumped out of the car in the country. Two days later William Armstrong, formerly mayor of Racine during a particularly odious period, owner of a foundry, and state chairman of the Veterans' Civic League, speaking in Milwaukee said: "These Communist black rats are undermining America to create an impotent citizenship. . . . Well, you know what we are doing to them in Racine."

Protests from Socialists, the Federated Trades Council, and labor groups poured in upon Mayor William Swaboda (a former Socialist), the council, and the governor. But the authorities were strangely unable to find even a remote clew to the many acts of terror. The fun continued. John Sekat, a Communist, was given one to two years in prison on a charge of breaking an automobile window during a strike at the Horlick Milk Company, although another man made a signed confession that he was the guilty person. A young woman Communist was given a prison term for "distributing leaflets," a third Communist for "inciting to riot." The *Journal-Times* began cutting notches for fallen Communists.

The day after his kidnapping Herman appeared at the office of Assistant District Attorney Oscar Edwards to swear out a warrant for his assailants. A newspaper reporter showed Edwards a statement made by Herman charging Chief Lutter with being a party to the kidnapping. Secretly the prosecutor got the chief on the phone, detained Herman, quickly typed out a warrant, and in ten minutes the victim of the kidnappers was jailed on a charge of criminal libel.

These things were being watched from Milwaukee by members of the League Against War and Fascism and particularly by George Wilbur, secretary of its professional group and son of a wealthy lumberman. Wilbur went to Racine, talked to bartenders, met various people, and quickly learned that the vigilante set-up was an open secret in Legion and employer circles. On a second trip a series of progressive introductions put him in direct touch with "the man who kidnapped Herman." The meeting took place in the office of one of the city's most prominent law firms, Smith, Beck, and Heft.

Wilbur wanted not merely to meet the kidnapper but to bring about his arrest. Obviously this was impossible in Racine, where the man was the hero of the day. Wilbur worked out a plan, a long-chance scheme that had in it all the elements of failure. He told the kidnapper, Nick Bins, a member of the Legion's drum-and-bugle corps and an unemployed salesman, that his uncle at Waukesha was having trouble with a labor agitator. Would Mr. Bins undertake to treat this scoundrel as he had Herman? He would, and gladly. A meeting was arranged for the following day.

Wilbur then went to Milwaukee, told members of the anti-fascist league he planned to trap Bins in the Wilbur home at Waukesha, and asked the Communist Party to help him. He said later he dared trust no one else in so "hot" a situation. The Communists furnished him with two radio technicians. At the last minute Wilbur called in a reporter for the Milwaukee *Journal* in order to assure the publicity

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necessary to the success of his plan. That same afternoon the trap was set. In the luxurious Wilbur home a microphone was set behind the sunroom draperies. A loud speaker was hooked up in the basement for use by the reporter if Bins should want the conference to be private. A woman was stationed at a hotel with instructions to call after the kidnapper's arrival and—in the event the plan worked—notify the local district attorney to make the arrest.

The "detective" then drove to Racine, picked up Bins, and brought him to Waukesha. The reporter was already on hand, masquerading as a brother at home with a cold. Mrs. Wilbur was present with her two small children. In the basement were the two radio men. The atmosphere was as tense as a gangster movie. Wilbur and Bins arrived ahead of schedule and caught Mrs. Wilbur and the reporter in the midst of a rehearsal. If the slugger noticed their confusion he gave no sign of it. He was a big man, well built, over six feet, weighing 200 pounds or more. (Herman weighs about 130 pounds and is slight in build.)

The employer "uncle" was summoned from his plant by telephone and arrived in a few minutes. The part was played, rather nervously, by a Milwaukee union railroad man. Bins was maneuvered into microphone position. He had no objection to the "brother's" presence, and the conference got under way. Seated in the affluent home, with a drink of excellent Scotch before him, Bins talked freely. Yes, he had kidnapped and slugged Herman. Dar Vriesman, secretary of the Racine Chamber of Commerce, had hired and instructed him. He was also the man who had wrecked the Communist headquarters and broken the plate-glass windows of Herman's two bondsmen. Notes tied to the bricks had been typed in the Chamber of Commerce office, as he got his instructions. The Racine employers were determined to put an end to labor agitation. All "illegitimate" agitators got their instructions from Moscow. The whole anti-radical drive was part of the Legion's Americanism program.

The ears of the plotters burned as Bins callously described how he tried to break Herman's legs with an automobile crank, and promised to treat the Waukesha agitator similarly. "Oh, I won't kill him," he said. "Even though you work in full cooperation with the authorities, you can't get away with a killing. But I'll make him wish he'd never been an agitator."

Bins had obtained his cars from a Racine Ford dealer named Frank Applegate. A federal agent from Chicago named Dan had driven the car when Herman was taken for a ride. Racine judges, particularly Judge Belden of the circuit court, a "brother legionnaire," were "100 per cent okay." Juries were taken care of. Bins modestly admitted that his effective vigilante work had made him admired in the best circles. He had been to parties. A charming lady had wanted to kiss him for his valor. An industrialist, one Mr. Johnson, had promised him a Christmas present.

The uncle remained a bit reserved, and Bins urged him to call Racine for references. "Call Chief Lutter," he said; "call any prominent attorney down there; call Dar Vriesman." The latter was reached at the Chamber of Commerce office by long distance; he talked a moment to Bins and then told the "uncle" that "Bins is all right for the job."

Bins didn't want to set a price for the Waukesha job. The arrangements should be made, he said, between the chambers of commerce of the two towns. He did, however, accept a little retainer of $10—in marked money.

Meanwhile the "tip-off" woman had called, received her signal, and gone to the Waukesha district attorney. Her near failure to force him to make the arrest justified Wilbur's decision not to let the authorities in on the plan. The Waukesha district attorney called the Racine district attorney, and several telephone exchanges took place. An alleged kidnapper was awaiting arrest in a prominent home, but no one wanted to arrest him. The woman became desperate, stood on her "rights as a citizen," and at length the arrest was made. District Attorney Brown of Racine came up to bring back the prisoner.

At Racine Bins was subjected to none of the usual police grillings. Chief Lutter refused to see his prisoner, said it was "Brown's job." Throughout the night Bins entertained visitors at the jail. Most of them were brother legionnaires. Next day the story took ribbon position in the Milwaukee *Journal*. In a frank manner it reported the affair, giving names and details as furnished by Bins. And that was a sad blow to the sense of security of the powers at Racine.

Since that day, more than a month ago, there have been no more acts of open terror in Racine. Instead, the Chamber of Commerce has run a series of vaguely phrased advertisements concerning the civic and industrial virtues of the city. Fred Heinisch, Legion commander and post-office employee, at first denied Bins was a legionnaire, then published and broadcast an appeal for defense funds for "Bins, a fellow-legionnaire." Vriesman gave three different statements to as many newspapers, denying and admitting the telephone conversation with Waukesha. The *Journal-Times* printed an amazing series of editorials headed "Legal Way Best in End," "Don't Backslide," and "Let Us Not Assume Defeatist Attitude." They sounded as though the editor felt his world had been suddenly yanked from under him, but entertained hopes of rebuilding it.

Right and might had suddenly been made wrong in Racine. The loathed Communists were in the position of having the goods on the city's most respectable elements. The powerful Milwaukee *Journal* had told the story in every home in the state. Those were bitter days. A secret John Doe inquiry was gone through with. All persons implicated by Bins were given, in the words of the *Journal-Times*, "an opportunity to refute the charges." Bins was duly bound over for trial on a charge not of kidnapping but of assault.

Then the disrupted forces of respectability began to recuperate. Herman was quickly tried before Judge Belden for criminal libel. With voluminous evidence in his pocket substantiating the statements made by Herman, the district attorney got a verdict of guilty from a jury in nine minutes. Only two of the defense's twenty witnesses were allowed to testify. The town breathed more freely. The front page of the *Journal-Times* became cheerful with daily pictures of legionnaires, including Dar Vriesman, presenting medals to students and making speeches on Americanism and on the need for character building in the schools.

A weighty file of evidence showing the need for a special prosecutor in the Bins affair was presented to Governor Philip La Follette by a committee of the League Against Fascism. He granted a long and courteous audience—and promised nothing.

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Books, the Dance, Drama

Canopy of Death

The Royal Way. By André Malraux. Smith and Haas. $2.50.

FOR readers of "The Conquerors" and "Man's Fate" this newly translated novel by Malraux is likely to prove something of a disappointment. Yet placed in a proper time relation to the two novels having a revolutionary theme it takes on great interest for the light it throws on the development of one of the most brilliant and mature of living fiction writers. If the assumption can be made that it was composed before "The Conquerors," although first published two years afterward (and everything in the book, form and style as well as subject, gives strength to such an assumption), "The Royal Road" represents an exhaustion through the imagination, a kind of vicarious purging of the mood which was the legacy of the last generation of European writers to the present.

Most of the book consists of a dialogue between its two principal characters: Claude, the young French archaeologist who seeks an escape from the tedium of respectable bourgeois society in a ransacking of the past in the form of forbidden art treasures in the jungle-covered temples of Siam; Perken, the Danish adventurer, who is driven on by the interpenetrated symbols of ambition and lust. The subject of the dialogue is death. In both men the idea of death has become an obsession strong enough to unite them in a common enterprise of plunder and conquest. For both death is not so much a culmination as a process—the gradual decline of a man's life, the death-in-life which triumphs if one submits to one's destiny "like a dog in its kennel." "But, living, to endure the vanity of life gnawing him like a cancer; all his life long to feel the sweat of death lie clammy on his palm." Their only protection against this sense of "death's austere dominion" is found in adventure, which is described not as an evasion but as a quest. For the life of directed action is an attempt to turn the raw materials of one's existence to some account; a protest against what Perken, anticipating the title of a later book by Malraux, calls "the human lot," man's sense of limitations, especially his humiliation at the hands of Time. For Perken, as for the revolutionary adventurer in "The Conquerors," any line of action—provided it is sufficiently dangerous, of course, and opposed to the established order—is its own justification because it is a defiance of death. To stake everything on one's last moment is also, in a sense, to choose one's death, which, as the character Claude remarks, nearly everyone bungles, in one way or another.

But the truth gradually emerges through all these dark speeches that what these two desperate fugitives from middle-class Europe really feel toward death is not enmity but infatuation. It is not to conquer but to surrender that they beat their way through the dense Asiatic forest. The sweetness of death, the wild elation which comes to Perken at the end, is really based on the sudden glimpse of the absurdity of life that it brings, the satisfaction that life is being annihilated.

> Nothing would ever give a meaning to his life—not even this sudden ecstasy that merged him in the sunlight. Men walked the earth, men who believed in their passions, their sorrows, their own existence—insects under the leaves, a teeming multitude beneath the far-flung canopy of death.

In the last analysis, the book is another expression of that mood of escape into the consoling embrace of death, whether through the avenue of introspection or of action, which runs through most of the fiction of the last generation. It will remind the reader in turn of Proust, of the early Mann, of the Conrad of "Victory" and "Heart of Darkness," and of Hemingway. And in its peculiar emphasis on the vanity of life, the nullity of existence, and the rest, it may be easily enough identified with a literary period that now belongs quite definitely to the past. In "Man's Fate" Malraux has distributed Perken's character between the young Chinese terrorist Ch'en, with his longing for annihilation, and the elderly Gisors, with his habit of soliloquizing on the emptiness of life. But in Kyo, May, Katov, and the several young revolutionists in that novel he has created a new and quite different type of character, for whom action is not an aphrodisiac in the long tryst with death but a means to a definitely conceived and highly desired end. And because for this reason their lives mean very much to these characters their deaths take on a significance that is tragic rather than pathetic. The difference between "The Royal Road" and "Man's Fate" is more profound than a difference between an early and a late book by the same author; it measures exactly the change that has taken place in Malraux's whole view of life and character, a change that is certain to have great influence on the future course of fiction in his own country and elsewhere.

It is a duty to mention the superb translation that Stuart Gilbert has made of the lushly rhetorical style which Malraux adopted in this book.

WILLIAM TROY

A New Monument to Lee

R. E. Lee. By Douglas Southall Freeman. Volumes III and IV. Charles Scribner's Sons. $3.75 per volume.

THESE volumes, completing Dr. Freeman's monumental life of Lee, have the virtues and the faults of the earlier ones. The author has left few sources unexamined and few minutiae of Lee's life untold. He offers many examples of penetrating tactical appraisal, with occasional passages of inspired prose. His general attitude toward Lee results in a tone of defense, although now and then he frankly admits his hero slipped. And yet, despite the generally admirable qualities of this definitive "Lee," readers conversant with the fascinating might-have-beens of the Civil War are likely to finish the final volume regretting that Dr. Freeman did not undertake to answer the larger question: Why did Lee fail?

Careful scrutiny of Lee's connection with the general Confederate effort makes one wonder to how large an extent the final defeat was due to Lee's own failure to insist upon establishing a functioning, competent supreme command of the South's war effort. Likewise, study of his record in what he deemed his proper sphere, the command of the Army of Northern Virginia, leaves one with a sense of amazement at his slowness to enforce his military will on his subordinates. While Dr. Freeman has not ignored these broader questions, he has shown how Lee failed rather than why.

And yet his volumes multiply the evidence that Lee was too good a man to be a supremely successful general. His conscience was so responsive to obligation, his own mood, temper, and will were so subordinated to the demands of duty, that it seemed almost psychologically impossible for him to understand how a lieutenant might hazard a battle because of pique. Then, too, Lee's sense of the propriety, in our American system, of subordinating military to civil authority was so strong that even in emergencies, when the success of the Southern efforts was hazarded by an inept President, he sedulously avoided asserting an authority which the Southern people wanted him to wield, and which someone must wield for the revolution to succeed. Had the spirit of Cromwell or

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Napoleon burned in Lee, the South's independence might have been won.

From a military standpoint Dr. Freeman's treatment of the Gettysburg campaign is about the most candid and satisfactory portion of his work. Lee's initial decision to invade Pennsylvania was open to the gravest question. His first major mistake thereafter was in giving Jeb Stuart orders capable of misconstruction, as a result of which Lee was deprived of the eyes and ears of his army during the critical days of the advance. Otherwise he would not have stumbled blindly into Gettysburg.

At Cold Harbor Lee's genius was at its height. There his strategic understanding was at its best. At every point of crisis he anticipated Grant's movements. In this campaign, too, he developed to the fullest the art of field fortification; the lines at Cold Harbor and then at Petersburg foreshadowed the trench systems on the western front in the World War. In explaining Lee's tardiness in moving from Cold Harbor to Petersburg, however, Dr. Freeman indulges in special pleading. Obviously Beauregard had cried "wolf" so often that Lee believed him no longer. Freeman also is unduly tender in assessing the responsibilities for Five Forks. The tragedy of surrender is well retold.

The most satisfying chapters, however, deal with the hero of Lexington. Lee accepted defeat with courage. "I think it wisest," he wrote, "not to keep open the sores of war, but to follow the example of those nations who endeavor to obliterate the marks of civil strife, and to commit to oblivion the feelings it engendered." He did not refight the war but sought to turn the South to the tasks immediately at hand, no matter how humble or how hard. This was one of the main reasons he accepted the presidency of Washington College, a poverty-stricken Shenandoah institution. There Lee did his duty day by day, by the power of example helping the South to bind its wounds and go ahead.

On one occasion Lee termed duty "the noblest word in the English language." His successes were due to his fidelity to that principle. His failures arose, not from any neglect of duty, but from the necessity for choosing between conflicting calls. Dr. Freeman's work admirably reveals Lee as a noble figure in war and a nobler one in peace.

GEORGE FORT MILTON

East Side World

Call It Sleep. By Henry Roth. Robert O. Ballou. $2.50.

DOES anyone remember Mary Antin's "The Promised Land," that thick book bound in blue cloth with the Statue of Liberty stamped in gold upon its cover? It was followed by "The Rise of David Levinsky," and, a few years ago, by "Jews Without Money." Henry Roth's first novel throws these predecessors into an ironic perspective. The general background of "Call It Sleep" is not unfamiliar; the opening pages are innocent enough: again the "Golden Land" at Ellis Island, May, 1907, where immigrants disembark.

So much for the preparation; we know the story. But one is soon aware that this is not merely a human document. Three levels of language are used to tell that story: one is the language of the narrator, another a direct translation of Yiddish into English, another a dialect that is neither English nor Yiddish but a transition between the two, at first a difficult and awkward tongue, ugly and harsh, yet slowly gaining speed and flexibility. Through the medium of these three levels a set of characters emerge: David the boy, his father, his mother, Aunt Bertha, and Rabbi Yidel Pankower, who is master within the whitewashed walls of a cheder. The technical device that Henry Roth employs reveals the various levels of experience in which his characters participate, and through the eyes of David we share something of that complex world: its transition between hope and fear, between fantasy and reality, between dreams of the old world left behind and the poverty-stricken terror of the new.

To David the cellar of a house gains special significance. There in the darkness rats breed and the sins of children who "play bad," obscene small girls and boys rolling in filth. But there, too, lies the secret of a profound mystery. On the street level walks his father, silent, wary, uncertain of livelihood, printer one week, milkman the next. Then, with a sudden loss of self-control, the quiet man is a tower of rage, another Job gone half insane. And here upon the street are casual friends, small boys like David; here also walks Aunt Bertha, a mountain of a woman, talk flowing from her lips in a quick, turgid stream of ribaldry. (Her trip with David to the Metropolitan Museum is, I think, one of the best single episodes in contemporary fiction.) Above the street, on the top floor of the tenement, is David's mother and the crowded apartment where the family lives. Yet these different levels seem to be contained within the white walls of the cheder, where Reb Yidel Pankower reads Isaiah. To look at Yidel Pankower one might see no more than the figure of an old man covered with years of unwashed dirt; he has affinity with the very rats in the cellar, and he administers authority on the street level by use of a sharp tongue; but in his understanding of the text before his eyes a revelation is implied. That revelation transcends all levels—and is the experience that will explain alike the mysteries of heaven and the cellar.

It is this end toward which David is moving throughout the book; and to his mind the crack in the street between the car tracks is a source of nameless power; there is the revelation in that bright moment before death when all mystery is revealed. In his progress toward that end one sees the bitter frustration of his father's life and the terror which surrounds the calm innocence of the boy's mother. They are living in a strange land and will die within its borders. David will survive the moment of attempted exploration of the nameless power and exchange the fears of fantasy for those of reality.

I believe I have indicated that Henry Roth has written a first novel of extraordinary character. It will not fall readily into the classification of "proletarian" novel, yet it reveals, I think, more of the actual conditions of living on New York's East Side than any other book I have ever read. In reading it one is forced to accept both technique and content as the purpose of the story; and in this case we are given an experience which few readers of contemporary fiction can afford to ignore.

HORACE GREGORY

Agricultural Utopia

Reshaping Agriculture. By O. W. Willcox. Foreword by Alvin Johnson. W. W. Norton and Company. $2.

A GENERATION ago Edward Bellamy created a considerable stir with his book "Looking Backward." Apparently its purpose was to convert humanity to socialism though not at all by the usual methods, such as arguments purporting to prove the defects of the present system, its inevitable downfall at all events, along with an elaborate presentation of evidence in favor of some more or less defensible scheme of distribution under the proposed system. Mr. Bellamy merely pictured the new state. The inquirer who asked about the Old Deal was told in kindly, clear tones that the New Deal was altogether more desirable. The sale of the book for a year or two, the organization of Bellamy clubs, the apparent conver-

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sion of many to the Socialist point of view merely by the dramatic presentation of the nature of the desired goal, gave promise of a social revolution, but thus far the promise is unfulfilled.

Not many days ago Howard Scott and his fellow-Technocrats gave us a few old facts dissolved in an 80 per cent solution of fancy, colored with extremely doubtful statistics, which showed that two hours of work a day is ample to keep humanity well supplied with everything needful. And now comes Dr. Willcox, who proposes, but does not urge, a comparable revolution, affecting not all society at once and equally, but agriculture primarily and the rest incidentally. His theory is not couched in the guise of fiction, but appears in the habiliments of science. Dr. Willcox is an agrobiologist; he defines his field as "the science of plant growth and yield in relation to the unit of land surface." In other words, his theory is a particular phase of the old doctrine of diminishing returns. He divides the problem into two parts—one, the diminishing physical productivity in proportion to quantity of labor and capital expended; the other, the diminishing value in relation to cost. However, Dr. Willcox assumes that questions of physical yields belong to the agrobiologist and those of cost and value to the economist. To this end Dr. Willcox supposedly makes a contribution. He gives an exposition of "perultimate" yields. *In a sense, the perultimate* yield, the known or the theoretical, as the case may be, is closely analogous to "absolute zero" in physics. As compared with it, the yield of our usual performance is absurdly small—less than 10 per cent of the possible. A 100 per cent efficiency in farming would eliminate the necessity of cultivating 91.5 per cent of the land now used in producing our principal crops. But Dr. Willcox proposes that "we keep our feet on the ground . . . and, for the present, regard only the birds actually in hand." That is to say, we shall deal with known yields only. On this basis he finds that we still need 11 per cent of our crop land. The assumption that what man has done man may do is no doubt well founded, but the broad-gauge assumption that what one man has done a hundred may do with the same skill is doubtful. Also the assumption that what occurs one year may be made to happen with certainty and regularity is doubtful. That "any Indiana corn grower may produce from 90 to 165.6 bushels per acre, if he has it *in him,*" may be true. Dr. Willcox may save his face by the insertion of the final phrase, *in him,* but neither economists nor farmers will be easily persuaded that "the surest way to reduce costs is to increase unit yields." The statement that there is no reason "why yields of 225 bushels per acre [of corn] should not be obtained in any part of the corn belt," fertility and water being furnished, will be questioned, as will the still more sweeping statement that there is no reason why "a farmer," and presumably a farmer of no rare qualification, "on ordinarily favorable soil . . . should not regularly achieve an efficiency of 50 per cent"—which would mean a production of around 125 bushels of corn per acre one year with another. This is to be done with due regard to agrobiology (diminishing increments in yield), and the economic law of diminishing returns.

The statements that irrigation water for ordinary farm crops may be had inexpensively from shallow wells, that intensive culture means higher economic returns, that the government can successfully fix prices in order to take care of the surplus—all these will be questioned before it will seem necessary to question the more inclusive assertion that an area equivalent to the cultivated acres of Illinois "could keep alive nearly half the population of the globe." Finally the author assures us that under the direction of these new principles of agrobiology, the ideals of socialism will be accomplished without losing the incentive of capitalism. If stupid humanity does not arrive at Utopia with little delay, it will not be because of any apparent lack of positivism on the part of the author in pointing to the promised land.

BENJAMIN HORACE HIBBARD

Newspapers and War

The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press, 1895-1898. By Joseph E. Wisan. The Columbia University Press. $4.50.

THIS is a study of propaganda, of the propaganda of the New York newspapers and the part it played in bringing about the Spanish-American War. The primary interest of the newspapers was circulation, and the great rivals were Hearst's *Journal* and Pulitzer's *World.* Other newspapers there were, of course, but these two were the leaders in a contest for subscribers and news which paid little attention to the truth of the reports printed. Cuba happened to be the best copy during this period; but, as Dr. Wisan points out, "none of the papers seemed primarily concerned with Cuba *per se,* with the possible exception of the *Sun,* on whose staff Martí had once been included, and the less important *Times.*" The *Tribune* and the *Mail and Express* were critical of Cleveland's non-intervention policy but in accord with McKinley's similar stand. The *Evening Post* tried to maintain a high standard of journalistic integrity. "The *Journal of Commerce* saw in Cuba only a menace to peace and prosperity. The *Herald* was more concerned with maintaining peace with Spain than securing justice for Cuba. The *Journal* and *World* simply used Cuba to achieve their prime purpose—an increase in circulation." No methods were too unethical, as is shown by the famous Hearst statement to the artist Remington—"You furnish the pictures; I'll furnish the war." The American people were soon worked up to the point of believing the atrocity stories printed, and the reporters knew that their jobs depended on getting such stories. There was a general disposition to believe the worst of Spain, and artists who had never been in Cuba drew scenes of cruelty, usually imaginary but effective. The Americans were easily convinced that the Spanish were cruel, vindictive, arrogant, and when the Maine was blown up, few doubted that Spain was responsible.

We have known of course that the newspapers were *an* influence in bringing on the war, but few have believed that the newspapers were *the* influence. Some readers will be inclined to scout this and look for more evidence of economic causation. The author shows that the *Journal of Commerce* consistently opposed war. "The leading commercial and financial interests of the nation favored an early restoration of stability," and the industrial and banking interest, just emerging from the depression of 1893, feared the effect of war on the financial structure. Mark Hanna and Edwin F. Atkins, the latter a leading investor in Cuba, opposed aid to the insurgents. Thus the economic interests were not idle, but as it happened they considered that peace was best for them. They sought to keep the lid on in Cuba in order to get out their profits.

In the search for the large interest which some have believed caused the war, the power of the papers has been minimized. Though there has been a tendency to acknowledge that the papers were important, the feeling has persisted that there had to be some more powerful influence back stage, and the big business men have been credited with engineering the outbreak of war. That this was not the case complicates rather than simplifies the problem of how to control war sentiment and propaganda. When comparatively small financial interests—for in fact the newspapers represented no very great financial investment—can throw a nation into war, how much more difficult must be the problem of controlling the really influential financiers when they find a possibility of profit in war!

Dr. Wisan's book is a well-documented, stimulating, and interesting study. We hope that he will follow it up with further studies of the relations of war and propaganda, con-

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sidering not the newspapers alone but also the many other agencies that are constantly fomenting bad relations between nations for their own petty, private gains.

BAILEY W. DIFFIE

Shorter Notices

Week End. By Phil Stong. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.

Phil Stong has left the Middle West and turned to the sophisticated Connecticut countryside for the material for his pretentious new novel. The story concerns a house party which is liberally attended by scientists, Junior Leaguers, actresses, writers, and advertising men. These familiar characters never fail to behave in the literary patterns which were cut out for them more than ten years ago. In "Week End" one can find all the expected things. There is a good deal of drunkenness, a smattering of fornication, a tragic misunderstanding, and a violent death. The book recalls all the bad, high-hat novels that have been generated since Scott Fitzgerald first put pen to paper. It differs from other products of its type only in that the awkwardness of its author has made it less slick, less agreeably narcotic than they. If Mr. Stong has any of that rural "horse sense" with which he has endowed so many characters he will forget the suburban byways and return to his plow.

The Proud Servant. By Margaret Irwin. Harcourt, Brace and Company. $2.50.

"The Proud Servant" is an excellent example of the old-fashioned, romantic historical novel. Miss Irwin tells the story of the Marquis of Montrose, the Scottish hero who rallied the wild Highland clans to fight a magnificent but hopeless battle for the life of Charles I, the Stuart king. Montrose is pictured as a man born out of his time, a medieval chevalier, who turned with distaste from the fanatical ministers and the sharp-dealing business men who had risen to rule Scotland in the name of religion and the middle class. Miss Irwin's account of the gallant, idealistic lord is thoroughly grounded in historical fact, yet she does not hesitate to embroider it with stitches more florid than is today's fashion. The book is deliberately charged with "atmosphere," but even those who prefer a more ascetic tone in their biographies must admit that she has brought her hero to life.

Contributors to This Issue

LOUIS ADAMIC, the author of "Dynamite" and "The Native's Return," is contributing a series of articles to *The Nation.*

LEFT WING will hereafter be a regular contributor of articles on sports and sport writing.

HEYWOOD BROUN, the well-known columnist of the *World-Telegram,* is president of the American Newspaper Guild.

GEORGE FORT MILTON is the author of biographies of Andrew Johnson and Stephen A. Douglas.

HORACE GREGORY will publish shortly a new volume of poems, "Chorus for Survival."

BENJAMIN HORACE HIBBARD is professor of agricultural economics at Iowa State College.

BAILEY W. DIFFIE, instructor in history at the College of the City of New York, is coauthor of "Porto Rico, a Broken Pledge."

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN is secretary of the School of American Ballet.

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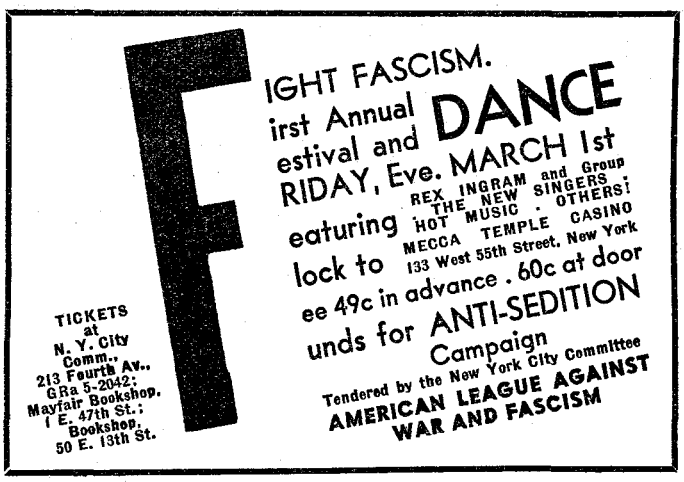

□ JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH Says: □

ACCENT ON YOUTH. Plymouth Theater. Hopeful message for the middle-aged in a lively comedy about playwright in love with his secretary. Witty and amusing.

ANYTHING GOES. Alvin Theater. Victor Moore as Public Enemy No. 13 in a No. 1 musical revue, with Ethel Merman at her best.

ESCAPE ME NEVER. Shubert Theater. Here is a heap of theatrical rubbish, romantically entitled. Few if any indeed, could play it one-half so charmingly as Elisabeth Bergner.

LIFE BEGINS AT 8:40. Winter Garden. Disputes with "Anything Goes" for first place among the revues.

NOAH. Longacre Theater. Reviewed in this issue.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE. Henry Miller's Theater. Much like the above but about a movie star this time and perhaps a trifle less mechanical.

POST ROAD. Ambassador Theater. Novel and exciting crook melodrama which begins as a quiet domestic comedy but has lots of surprises up its sleeve.

RAIN FROM HEAVEN. Golden Theater. Perhaps the best—and certainly the most substantial—of S. N. Behrman's excellent comedies. With Jane Cowl as a charaming embodiment of urbanity and tolerance in a world seemingly about to lose both.

REVENGE WITH MUSIC. New Amsterdam Theater. Charles Winninger, Rex O'Malley, and Libby Holman in a lavish and generally entertaining operetta with lots of comedy and some good dancing in a more or less Spanish manner.

SAILORS OF CATTARO. Civic Repertory Theater. The third and much the best offering by the Theater Union, which goes in for plays with a revolutionary purpose. This one is all about a mutiny on board an Austrian man-of-war, and it is first rate as a play, quite aside from the red-flag waving.

TOBACCO ROAD. Forrest Theater. Sub-human but fascinating behavior of the Georgia crackers.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR. Maxine Elliott's Theater. Tense but grim drama about a fiendishly perverse child, who is played with extraordinary force by Florence McGee. One of the most discussed plays of the year.

THE PETRIFIED FOREST. Broadhurst Theater. Superb performance by Leslie Howard in Robert Sherwood's engrossing play about a lost intellectual. Exciting as melodrama but a great deal more besides.

THUMBS UP. St. James Theater. Bobby Clark, Hal Le Roy, and others in a slightly old-fashioned but entertaining review.

The Dance

Some American Dancers

ONE of the most interesting developments in American dancing is the rise of the Workers' Dance groups into something like a producing entity. Made up largely of girls trained either in the New York Wigman School or by Martha Graham for her group, they have created a great deal of favorable interest among dance partisans. Their programs bear the names of various revolutionary abstractions, which are demonstrated in the danced arrangements. It is perhaps inevitable, at the beginning, that very often the titles seem to be interchangeable, that the weight of the two techniques from which they stem is hard to support, and that the main attraction is the earnestness and belief in themselves of the dancers and their hopeful audiences.

Wigman has an excellent school, but from the earliest days, when she appeared in the Laban recitals, she has manifested a lack of interest in spectacle. Her accent on improvisation as composition may produce an increased psychic awareness in the bodies of her pupils, but they are seldom conscious that there is, after all, an audience watching them. Unfortunately, the audience before which the Workers' Dancers perform is excessively anticipatory. The word "choreography" has been added to their vocabulary, and they consider dancing a pretty fair dialectical argument. Hence it is twice as hard for talented girls like Jane Dudley, Anna Sokolow, and Sophie Maslow to get the kind of harsh accelerative criticism that a more disinterested, if more bourgeois, audience might provide. This, however, is of secondary importance. The workers are building the largest dance public in New York and it will not be slow to ask for the best—if the Theater Union audience is any criterion.

Martha Graham recently gave a sell-out recital of more than usual interest. Though this reviewer is blind to Miss Graham's aesthetic, he admires her personal integrity, her persistence, her success, and her talent for composition. In an otherwise graceless production of lush vulgarity in which Katharine Cornell framed herself as Juliet, Miss Graham arranged some beautiful movements that admirably suggested Florentine social dances of the Renaissance. They were better than the action for which they were contrived as background. In her own recital "Course," with music by George Antheil, was particularly impressive. The costumes, in series of yellow and white, green and white, red and white, the charge of the girls tearing head first across the stage, and the held postures of the well-trained group gave curious but unmistakable proof of a talent which is positive, in spite of Wigman, in spite of Wigman's diluters and Graham's imitators.

If Miss Graham would set herself the perhaps irksome task of forcing herself to fit a subject, a story even, it would do wonders for her. The structure of a plot would hold in a really dramatic net the otherwise interesting but frequently detached movements which she displays. Her music is unmelodic and trivial. She is strong enough to stand a line of melody in motion without collapsing, as do so many of her imitators, out of nervous fatigue, which broken harmonies disguise and forgive. One would like to see her invent Stravinsky's "Rites of Spring" free of Massine's second-hand memories of Nijinsky's inimitable arrangements, or "Noces," or "Persephone." Somehow her work is strong but unrelated to a central, consecutive strength; the impulse is present, the energy flows, the result is apparent but diffuse, confusing. What she most lacks is a positive subject matter, even a liter-

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ary idea, or, refusing that, melody that can take her off the ground.

Tamiris has been dancing at the Group Theater's Sunday-night performances. She is not hard to look at—once. But Bob Lewis's imitation of Wigman which followed one of her numbers was funnier and a more savage criticism than one would take the trouble to write about her. The audience, a splendidly anticipatory one for "Waiting for Lefty," gave her a big hand. Don't hit the comrade, she is trying. All right, but Tamiris is an embarrassment for anything as coherent, unpretentious, and alive as Odet's brilliant play.

Doris Humphries and Charles Weidman have also recently performed, but what it was they performed is still their secret. They seemed to enjoy the clear spaces of their stage but they infrequently permitted any participation on the part of their audience.

After a three-year interval Agnes de Mille returned to give an interesting recital. It became increasingly apparent as she danced that her talent is strongly toward composition. Her invention to the music of a movement of the "Rites of Spring" was absorbing technically and emotionally. Her country and folk dances have a bumptious, bouncing amiability which is not deadened even by three similar numbers in one night. Her dances of style and epoch have authority, but more archaeological and dramatic than choreographic value. She is a finely theatrical artist. It is earnestly to be hoped that she will have the opportunity soon to forsake the ambiguous and thankless responses of the concert stage and enter directly into group work.

The New School for Social Research is organizing a valuable series of evenings whereby dancers without reputations can show to a good public the results of their labor. Not at all in the general run of "modern" dancing, though God knows why not, was Roger Pryor Dodge's "Black and Tan Fantasy." Mr. Dodge knows jazz dancing the way some Russians know ballet. He has codified it from years of research. He explodes into its action with violent and sustained excitement. He is well worth watching.

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

Drama

Noah Has His Doubts

THE Biblical story of Noah and his Ark is not long on characterization or on what we critics call psychological analysis. The author was no Job, to whom a boil is interesting chiefly as an occasion for philosophical speculation, but a plain blunt man concerned with such simple facts as a forty-day rain and a well-calked boat. His hero appears, therefore, as a simple extrovert who takes things as they come, and precious little is said about his mental reactions. We are not even told whether or not he was fond of animals, though it must have made a tremendous difference if he was.

Many of these deficiencies are now supplied in the very Green Pasturish dramatization of the tale which has been translated from the French and produced at the Longacre Theater before quaintly stylized sets by Cleon Throckmorton. The author is that André Obey whose somewhat precious "The Rape of Lucrece" was acted here not so long ago by Katharine Cornell, and if I read his intention aright he attributes to the hero his own somewhat critical attitude toward the tactics of the Almighty. It was all very well to save specimens of every creature including man, but why was not God intelligent enough to perceive that he was also saving the seed of every pestiferous trait in human nature? What

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is the good of drowning all the families except one if that one, eager to increase and multiply, is typical of all the rest? Yet man reproduces man just as surely as fleas reproduce fleas. The weather had hardly cleared before it began to be perfectly plain that the Flood was a failure if it had really been expected to change anything very much. Ham, Shem, Japhet, and their wives began to quarrel with one another. Their joy when they saw land was not a holy joy but a savage desire to revel and fight and kill in the good old way. If God, seeing what He saw, let them go on their way, it may have been out of His infinite patience, but perhaps it was only out of an infinite despair.

Noah was not easily or willingly skeptical. While the Ark was building he bore without complaining the cryptic nature of God's commands and the exasperatingly intermittent character of their intercourse. When land stubbornly delayed its reappearance he did what he could to keep a mutinous crew in order and to stand up for an Omnipotence of whose fairness it was impossible not to have private doubts. Indeed, he never did come any nearer to rebellion than to permit a certain desperation to creep into the accent with which he pronounced his habitual "Thy will be done." But he got little reward for all this submission. The three sons go off with their wives in different directions, leaving him alone with his weary and not too dependable wife on the rocky summit of Ararat. Even the animals, forgetting their previous fellowship, have returned to savagery, and Noah, not really meaning what he says, calls out, "I am satisfied, O God! Are you?" For answer, the rainbow flashes out in the sky and it is the most touching moment of the play. But it is also ambiguous or worse. God may be satisfied, but Noah is very obviously wondering what it is that he has reason to be satisfied with.

So much for what the play, a bit too preciously and a bit too quaintly, says. For if the truth must be told, there is rather too much padding and rather too much foolery of a not particularly inspired kind. In translation at least the whole seems somewhat languid, especially during the first two acts, and the moments of significance seem rather too widely separated. What does hold it together, however, is an inspired performance by Pierre Fresnay in the title role. Mr. Fresnay came to this country as Ivonne Printemps's leading man, but he had little opportunity to display his talents in "Conversation Piece." Now, however, it is evident that he is a remarkable actor capable of extraordinary subtlety and restraint. There is nothing spectacular about his Noah, but he gradually builds up an unforgettable picture of the troubled, kindly, and grotesque old man who is terribly lonely in his solitary loyalty to a God who makes only sporadic and casual acknowledgment of his fidelity.

I made above some reference to the inevitable comparison with "The Green Pastures," but "Noah" sadly lacks both the gusto of the former and any suggestion of the ecstasy to which it frequently rose. Indeed, the resemblances are largely superficial, for if both are in a sense pseudo-naive, the difference is great and it lies in the fact that while the one is simply a modern *jeu d'esprit,* the other acquired substance and feeling from a genuine folk tradition. One may argue as much as one likes concerning the extent to which the primitive religious feeling in "The Green Pastures" had been transformed by sophisticated treatment, but the fact remains that the living core of it was the creation of the active imagination of a whole race. That is the reason why it had power of a kind which "Noah" could not possibly have. What one remembers of "The Green Pastures" is the effect of a strange, non-rational piety. What one will remember of "Noah" is a very modern skepticism and, more especially, the very human figure of a long-suffering old man whose perplexities are a little comic and more than a little touching.

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